

THE FALSE HEIR.

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CHAPTER I.

TRUST it is not presumptuous to suppose, that, to that Being who has revealed himself to us as a God of mercy and of love, the sight of human fate and all its vicissitudes, the wandering course of each intelligent creature, the effect of every man's actions upon others during his life, the results that flow from generation to generation unto the end of time, the hopes that are formed but to be disappointed, the disappointments which are in reality blessings, the longings that which would prove destructive, the joys that kill and the sorrows that make alive, with all the infinite complications of one event with another from the commencement to the close of which offer to our eyes nothing but a confused, extricable maze—must be a subject of deep interest, as His all-comprehending view beholds the beginning and the end, and sees creation and all its results rounded in by His own glory. Yes; surely it must be to almighty love and wisdom a sight of deep interest; for God, in permitting free-will to man, could never leave him without the protection of His goodness and mercy; and the mere exercise of those attributes implies a care, an interest in his fate.

To our limited view, however, the course of one human being offers matter for meditation and for feeling enough; and to trace the life of a fellow-mortal from the cradle to the grave—wherever we can do so with anything like a knowledge of the actions, the events, the motives, and the thoughts—is, perhaps, the most instructive study that we can pursue. The history before us, then—a history which all who have acquainted with the annals of France during the last century upon which I know to be a true one—I shall commence with

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them; and, even while the party from the approaching, they ceased not in their presence were somewhat curious to eyes not much witness the habits and manners of the lower person had brought with him to the wedding of some kind, as is still very customary of France; and now, two and two—a man they advanced to the sound of the fiddle, the offering to the young couple; the man to the bride, and taking a kiss for an equivalent presenting hers to the bridegroom, and a salute in return. Some of the presents were of value; but, in those cases where poverty did not deny any expensive purchase, the giver covered his gift by the ludicrousness of its character, coloured to excite a laugh at his fun, if his admiration of his generosity.

With every sense of propriety, however, soon as the marquis and marchioness were made it evident that they were coming to presents likewise, drew back to let them advance and bridegroom rose from the chairs in which seated, and received them with all respect.

Marguerite was a pretty-looking girl, high of gay and light-hearted fun under a demure Latouches himself was, as we have said, a countryman; though, to speak truth, he seemed somewhat more abashed by his new capacity of bridegroom than Marguerite by hers of bride.

The marquis and marchioness presented their gifts; and the noble lord, though not a man to carry the *droits du seigneur* to any unpleasant extent, took a hearty taste of the fair maid's lips, while the bridegroom approached his respectfully to the cheek of the marchioness. The little boy was fuddled and caressed by both, as he held out the *bou-bouinière* to his mother's former maid, saying, "There, Marguerite; my uncle's present is in the inside."

The maid opened it, and instantly dropped a low curtsey to Monsieur de St. Medard; while the bridegroom looked over her shoulder into the box with a glistening eye at the sight of the gold, and whispered to her to count it. Marguerite, however, knew better, and, closing the box again quietly, handed it to the Latouches, saying in a low tone, "Fie, you miser!"

The noble party then withdrew to a little distance, and talked to some of the elder people, while the rest of the peasants brought up their presents also, and shouts of laughter continued till the sun went down. The merry

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scene then closed, and Marguerite and her husband retired to a cottage hard by; while the marquis, his uncle, his wife, and his little boy, re-entered the château, and talked quietly over the event of the day.

"She is a very pretty girl, and, I dare say, a good girl, too," said Monsieur de St. Medard as they walked into the saloon. "Do you know the man well?"

"Oh, yes," replied the Marquis de Langy: "he holds a little farm of mine on the edge of the forest; a stout, hard-working fellow, and will make Marguerite an excellent husband."

"Perhaps so," replied Monsieur de St. Medard, with a thoughtful air. "A cunning animal, I should suspect."

"Oh, no," rejoined his nephew; "he is a very good creature, and an old suitor of Marguerite's."

"Constancy is something, at least in this world," said the viscount. "And now, my good niece and nephew, have you any commands for England?"

"For England!" exclaimed Monsieur de Langy, starting; "why, what are you going to do in England?"

"First, to fulfil some of the king's commands," answered Monsieur de St. Medard; "and next, to see some old friends there. But the truth is, I go as ambassador, to see if by my influence we cannot smooth down some of the difficulties regarding this commercial treaty."

"They will make a heretic of you in England!" cried Madame de Langy.

"That would be difficult," said the viscount; "but, nevertheless, Adele, you would look upon that as something gained from the enemy at least: would you not?"

"No!" cried she, eagerly; "no! Better be of no religion at all than a heretic."

Monsieur de St. Medard smiled and looked at his nephew, and the conversation turned to other subjects.

There we will leave it, in order briefly to recapitulate the events of the ensuing year, as far as the family of the Marquis de Langy was concerned. The Viscount de St. Medard returned to Paris on the following day, and thence proceeded to England on the mission with which he was charged. Not long after, the fine boy of Monsieur and Madame de Langy was taken ill with one of the complaints of childhood, and, though he recovered, never regained altogether his health and strength.

During the winter of the ensuing year, however, the fair proportions of the marchioness were seen to change. The marquis seemed well satisfied that his wife's figure had lost its symmetry; and, though he was always a kind and affectionate husband, showed greater tenderness and care than

ever. As the spring was coming on, the marchioness her carriage to the farm of Latouches on the borders of forest of Compiègne, which was nearly a day's journey the château; and the vehicle rolled back again, bringing former maid, Marguerite, now Madame Latouches.

When the marchioness beheld her, she could n laughing at the change which had taken place in the girl's once smart figure, and she exclaimed, "Alas, Marguerite! I wonder if I look such a round, squat perso as yourself."

"Oh, dear! no, madam," replied the former maid, had not forgotten the duty of flattery. "You are so taller than I am; one would scarcely know that you we

"There is no doubt of that, Marguerite," said the chioness; "and, as I promised you in October, you nurse the baby."

"Oh, dear! I am so glad!" cried Marguerite. "I a did love children, you know, madam, and yours I sha beyond anything."

CHAPTER II.

On! when youth gasps for the object of desire, how gla would he step over the long hours of expectation as easily the teller of a tale! How many would at this moment immutable fate would let them, annihilate the two or th years to come which lie between them and fruition, in or to be at once at the bright goal towards which they st their eager gaze!—how many!—how many! And yet all are young; for even middle age learns that half the light is in the pursuit, and age has found that often be we reach that goal the prize is gone. Happy is it for me man, that he cannot, as I can in this book, blot out the fi of two or three years, and say in two words—they passe.

Two years and nine months had gone by since the Marq de Langy and Marguerite, her former maid, spoke of ev to which the hopes of both were turned; and now I r lead the reader to a small farm-house at the edge of forest of Compiègne. It was eventime in the autumn. leaves were yellow in the deep wood, and some of t already strewed the ground. The gnat, the shrill trump of the season, whirled high in the air; the partridge heard calling in the field; a rosy lustre spread warm o the blue sky, and caught some light clouds overhead. Th was a coolness in the breeze, which told that the breath winter would soon chill the world; and every sign on ti

rb, and on field, said that the bright time of year was
 , and the dark and chilly period at hand.

Surely nothing dies but something mourns,

he poet; and the death of summer, of all other losses,
 , call forth and to deserve the sorrow of all the earth.
 sadness steals over everything, and the brightest au-
 al day has something solemn and serious in its splendour
 h speaks of the fleeting of enjoyment, and points to the
 , of all dear hopes.

ie farm-house was small and lowly—little more than a
 e, indeed—with a mud wall running around the court
 ut-buildings; but it was prettily situated on a slight
 deep wood rose behind, and in front spread the un-
 ng fields of the farm, a small but deep stream flowing
 lowest part of the valley which it overlooked. The
 f the building turned to the south-west, so as to mono-
 the greater part of the light of evening. On the left
 little vineyard, through which the rays of the sun were
 streaming in pleasant lines of yellow lustre, while a
 l, flat green offered a sort of esplanade, from which an
 nsive and beautiful view presented itself to the eye; and
 the right was a little wood, detached from the forest, and
 onging to the Marquis de Langy. Beyond the field be-
 e the cottage ran a road—not exactly a highway, indeed,
 t one of the second class; and from it branched off a
 h leading to a small hamlet, above which might be seen
 ing the spire of the parish church.

Long lines of light and shade, as tree and upland inter-
 sed, stretched across the whole prospect; a troop of cattle
 eared winding up under the direction of a little girl; and
 vn a distant bank a flock of sheep followed their shepherd,
 ing their way homeward to the fold. The sound of a
 ce singing a merry song in the evening came, not alto-
 her cheerfully, on the ear; and the whole scene was
 aceful and quiet, but still grave—one might also say
 lancholy. At least, so it was felt by a gentleman who
 lked slowly up the path from the village, and approached
 e farm-house.

As was the case then, and is still, with most buildings of
 e kind in France, the first room that one entered was the
 chen, which is, in fact, the saloon of the lower orders; and
 that of the farm of Godard, for so was called the house we
 eak of, sat Marguerite Latouches by the fire, which was
 urning the evening soup, watching the progress of the
 okery. One little boy, between two and three years old,
 od at her knee, and another of the same age, or very
 arly so, sat in the doorway of the farm, sometimes amus-

ing himself by scraping the dust into tiny pyramids with his small hands, sometimes raising his round rosy face towards the sky, and looking at the glowing clouds overhead. The evening was growing cold; and Marguerite, casting some more pieces of wood upon the embers, called to the little boy to come in, a command which he did not seem very willing to obey. She repeated the order in a sharp tone, for Marguerite was now the farmer's wife; and, though but little more than three years had passed since her marriage, one could scarcely recognise the smart, slim, smooth-tongued, pretty *soubrette*, in the stout, bustling, active, quick-tempered wife of Gerard Latouches.

"Come in!" she cried; "come in this minute, or I will give you a drubbing, you little rebel!"

The boy looked out of the door a moment longer, and then toddled up to her side, saying in his childish accents, "Man coming."

"Not coming here," replied Marguerite Latouches, "unless it's papa."

"No, not papa," rejoined the boy; and the next moment, as Marguerite rose and took a step towards the door to see who it was, the gentleman we have spoken of entered the farm-house, and was received with a low curtsy.

He paused for a moment, gazing at Marguerite as if in doubt, and then said—

"Ah, Marguerite! you have grown so stout that I scarcely recollected you. Do you know me?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied the wife of Latouches—"quite well, though I did not know you were come back from foreign parts."

"I have been in France three days," replied the gentleman; "and, as I passed this way from Picardy, I resolved I would stop four or five miles short of my proper lodging-place, to see my little namesake, and bear news of him to Victor and Adele. Two fine boys, upon my life! Which is *he*, Marguerite?"

The woman paused an instant, hesitated, and coloured. What was it that moved her? The reader may learn hereafter.

In the mean time, Monsieur de Medard went on, scarcely waiting for a reply: "But I need not ask you: this fair-haired urchin is my little Francis."

"No, sir," replied Marguerite, as the viscount put his hand upon the head of the boy, who had been standing at her knee; "that is my son—the other is your godson."

Monsieur de Medard gazed at the child with a thoughtful look, and then called him, saying, "Come hither, Francis: I am thine uncle, boy; wilt thou love me?"

The child ran towards him without fear or hesitation, and, for his own reply, held up his fair round face, and gave the stranger a kiss.

"Well, thou art a dear boy," said Monsieur de St. Medard, holding him to his heart; "let us see thy face;" and he carried him to the doorway, gazing at him intently for a moment or two. "Why, thou art not like thy father, or thy mother either," he continued: "more like me, I should think, or my poor brother."

"Oh, yes, sir; very like the marquis's father," said Marguerite Latouches, approaching.

"Why, do you recollect him, Marguerite?" asked the viscount.

"Yes, sir, quite well," replied the farmer's wife. "You know, my brother, who is now the intendant of the marquis, was then a servant of his father, your brother, sir."

"Ay," said Monsieur de St. Medard; "I remember.—The boy is like him. Well, I can safely tell them he is well and thriving. When was his father here?"

"Why, sir, not for this twelvemonth," answered Marguerite in some surprise. "Do you not know that Monsieur de Langy is with the army of the Upper Rhine, and that madame is very ill at Nancy?"

"No, indeed," said Monsieur de St. Medard, with a look of sorrow and surprise; "I had not heard it. But I have been wandering far and wide, Marguerite: I have been in India."

"In the Great Indies!" exclaimed Marguerite, "that is very far, indeed."

As she spoke, a loud cry attracted her attention; and, turning round, Monsieur de St. Medard and herself perceived that the little boy whom he had at first mistaken for his nephew's son had fallen into the fire. With a loud shriek the woman darted towards him and dragged him forth; but his clothes were in a blaze; and, had it not been for the presence of the viscount, the child would have been burned to death, and perhaps the mother also; for she held him clasped in her arms, and the flame was catching her own apron. That gentleman, however, who was an old soldier, prompt and ready in every moment of difficulty, unclasped the large blue roquelaure, or coat-cloak, which he wore, and, casting it over both mother and child, extinguished the fire in a moment. She herself was uninjured; but the right arm of the little boy was severely burned, though apparently not so much so as to place him in any danger. His cries, however, were very bitter; and after endeavouring to soothe him for some time, Monsieur de St. Medard left the cottage, saying he would send up a surgeon from the village.

"There is no surgeon there, sir," said Marguerite; "there is no surgeon there; but the curé is a great doctor. He will come up, sir; he will come up. Hush, my poor hush!"

Monsieur de St. Medard walked down towards the vil with a rapid step, though in a meditative mood. So much indeed, were his thoughts occupied, that he scarcely saw farmer Latouches himself, who was coming up on his ret home, till the stout peasant bowed low and covered head, saying, "*Bon jour, Monsieur le Vicomte.*"

Monsieur de St. Medard looked up, and instantly recognised Latouches, who had with him a tall, stout-made, handsome-looking boy, of some fourteen or fifteen years of age with a countenance expressive of talent and activity of mind yet with a somewhat shy and bashful look, which is rarely to be found even among the bashful, except there is a consciousness of some weakness, fault, or vice, at the bottom of the heart.

Monsieur de St. Medard was something more than a general observer of the human character: he was endowed with the sort of instinctive insight into the minds of others which some men do certainly possess as a gift, not an acquirement. He was cautious in using it, for, sceptical in all his ideas, he doubted its reality and its accuracy, and never relied upon his own first impressions of another till those impressions were confirmed and justified by after observation. He had seldom, if ever, found himself wrong, however; and, after telling Latouches what had happened at the farm, he walked on, saying to himself, as he thought of the countenance of the lad who was with the farmer, "That will be a bold and powerful fellow, but I doubt that he will be a very honest one."

Without further comment he proceeded to the village, found out the good curé, and sent him up to the house of Madame Latouches, after having conversed with him for a moment or two in regard to the two children. This conversation brought reflections into his mind which lasted during the greater part of the evening, after he had returned to the little cabaret where he had taken up his abode, which his servants had made as comfortable for him as circumstances permitted.

Reflections similar to those which occupied Monsieur de St. Medard may perhaps have already crossed the minds of my readers, though perhaps his thoughts were modified by the circumstances of the times and the country.

"Well," he said, meditating over the scene in the farm. "I cannot help thinking that this custom of ours is both a barbarous and an unnatural one, for a mother to give her child

to the hands of a comparative stranger, to educate as well to nurse during the first three years of its life; to put it in a cottage, and let it receive its first impressions from persons in a low and ignorant condition. The practice has quite gone out in England; I wish it would go out with us so. The excuse we make is, that the child becomes more robust and healthy than if it were subjected to all the delicate treatment of a fond mother in a wealthy and luxurious house. They say a child's bodily constitution is fixed in the first three years of its existence: they seem to forget its mental constitution altogether. My belief is, that a child's education begins when it is six weeks old, and that every hour, after its very first ideas develop themselves, roots in its mind some principle which affects its whole existence; implanting thoughts, feelings, tendencies, a thousand-fold more difficult to eradicate than those which are received in after life. Seeds planted in a virgin soil shoot far more deeply down and produce a thousand-fold more fruit than when the ground has been exhausted by repeated crops. If I had a son, I would not cast him on the hands of strangers for years—no, not for hours."

Such reflections occupied the thoughts of Monsieur de St. Medard, as we have already said, during the greater part of the evening; for he was one of those whose minds are almost always busy with things of great moment; and, in many instances, his ran before the age in which he lived. Unfortunately, indeed, in breaking away from the shackles of evil custom, folly, and prejudice, it overleaped all reasonable barriers, and cast away not alone the chains that bound it, but the garments with which it was clothed.

The practice, however, upon which he commented was at one time almost universal throughout what were called the civilized states of Europe; and the first two or three years of a child's life were spent in the cottage of some foster-parent, very often as badly chosen as the system itself was badly devised. Mothers, and fathers, too, excused to themselves the act on various pretences; but fashion, vice, vanity, were in reality the only foundations. Amongst a nation where the latter weakness, namely, vanity, has always been the predominant fault in the national character—a fault which, as is very often the case, may lead to some of the tinselled splendours of worldly greatness—it is easy to understand that this bad custom took a firmer root, and lasted longer, than with any other people; and, though it had diminished at the period of the Revolution, it was in full vogue not many years before that event. The eldest son of the Marquis de Langy had been so brought up in the house of one of his tenants; and when a second son appeared, he, as

we have seen, had been immediately given over to the care of the girl who had been his mother's maid.

Of a kind heart and a good disposition, Marguerite had loved him nearly as well as her own child; and both the father and mother had every cause to be satisfied with the treatment which their offspring had received up to the period when the marquis was obliged to join the army on the Rhine, and his wife accompanied him into Lorraine. His prolonged absence and her own illness made her more than once think that it was lucky her little Francis had been placed in such good hands. But, alas! Adele de Langy did not know all that was taking place in the farm of Godard.

Too often does it happen in all the affairs of life, too often does it happen with every class of men, that we content ourselves, that we congratulate ourselves on knowing that one part of any complicated transaction is going right, without thinking of all the many parts that may be wrong and ruined. It is one of the great evils of the one-sidedness of most men's nature that they fix their whole thoughts, and direct their whole efforts, to a very small branch of each subject presented to them. A statesman looks at the operation of the law he frames, perhaps upon one class of people only; perhaps upon one portion of the interests of that class; perhaps upon one portion of the interests of the world at large; forgetting altogether either the multitudes that must be affected collaterally, or the manifold minor necessities of the very beings whom he seeks to benefit, or the innumerable results to society in its moral temperament and its physical state, which any law affecting one of the great questions of polity must touch either remotely or immediately.

Again, a father applies himself to the intellectual culture of his son: he loads his mind with knowledge; he teaches him language after language; he feeds him with the dry scrapings of the rind of antiquity; he adds mathematics to arithmetic, and finishes the pile with geometry; he crushes him, in fact, under keys, yet never teaches him to open one door. Another parent looks to the culture of his son's body: he is taught grace and ease of carriage, skill in all sports and exercises; he can ride, he can leap, he can pitch the bar; he can fence, dance, swim, with the best. But the heart, reader, the heart is altogether forgotten; the spirit is without its culture; the feelings are without their due government. Or perhaps the case may be reversed, though, alas! that is but seldom; for the material things of life offer that which is so much more tangible, that the idleness of intellect disposes almost all men rather to deal with them than with those that are more difficult to grasp. It is the one-sidedness of our general nature which has retarded the progress of society

more than anything else on earth; and that also is the defect which, in domestic life and all its relations, causes one-half of the miseries that exist. Thank God! a war has at length commenced against this great error, and men have not only learned that every object has its many sides, but that they themselves have each their many powers for examining, considering, and appreciating the various qualities and relations of everything that is submitted to them. Men can no longer limit their views who would pretend to greatness, but, in dealing with the infinite variety of other things, must bring into action the infinite variety that is in themselves. As under the green surface of the ocean, whether it be rising into mountains of foam or calm as the face of innocent hope, there are a thousand unseen currents tending different ways, so in every affair of life are there results and tendencies below the surface, and in the breast of every man qualities, capabilities, streams of soul, if we may so call them, which he must seek for, discover, and define, if he would shape his course aright.

To return, however, to the matter from which we have strayed: The Marquise de Langy had placed her son in the cottage of the peasant, with the purpose of ensuring to him that health and strength which were then supposed to follow a hardy education in early youth, and she thought of nothing more. She was content to know that this object was secured; and she was neither aware nor inquired whether his mind was suffering—nay, nor whether any other of his interests whatsoever were endangered by his residence there. The reader will learn hereafter that they were deeply affected; but how, it is the purpose of this tale to show. For the present we must return to the farm-house, and speak a few words of the farther events of that night.

On the arrival of Latouches himself at the cottage, Marguerite did not seem particularly well pleased at the sight of his companion. Her anxiety for the little boy whose arm had been burnt, however, occupied her too much for many comments on the appearance of Jean Mara's, as she called the youth who accompanied her husband.

"Some new mischief, I suppose," she said; "I wonder if he will ever be steady."

"I should think not," replied Latouches; "a young good-for-nothing! However, he must sleep here, Marguerite; for, if he goes back again, his master will half-kill him."

"It must be in that room, then," rejoined Marguerite, pointing to a small chamber off the kitchen. "I won't have him up-stairs again."

"I can sleep anywhere," said the boy, laughing with a saucy air; "in the wood if you won't take me in, Marguerite."

"Ay, and make a fine *fricot* for the wolves," answered Marguerite. "But don't talk so loud: the poor little man will go to sleep if you will let him."

A few minutes after the good curé entered in haste, and applied such remedies as he judged necessary to soothe the child and heal the burn. Latouches himself showed great anxiety; and the only one who seemed careless was the youth, Jean Marais, who took the other little boy upon his knee, fondled, played with, teased him, and seemed delighted with the child's bold impetuosity. The poor little sufferer was, after a time, lulled into slumber; and Marguerite then put the other boy to bed also, saying to her unwelcome guest, "Get you to your room, Jean, and to sleep; it's the only way of keeping you out of mischief."

The lad laughed, and withdrew into the little sort of cabin which was assigned to him; and in a few minutes, without much preparation, was safely ensconced under such bed-clothes as he could find.

When all was quiet, Marguerite and her husband looked in each other's faces for a moment or two in silence, but with a meaning and somewhat stern expression on both parts. A long conversation ensued, in the course of which Marguerite related the visit of Monsieur de St. Medard; and her husband put various questions to her in an irritable and impatient tone. The conference lasted for more than an hour, and ended by the wife of Latouches going to bed in tears, while he remained for a moment in the kitchen. Taking out four or five louis and a handful of silver, which he had brought from the neighbouring market, Latouches deposited the whole sum safely in the drawer of a large oaken table which stood in the middle of the room, having first counted a small sum which was there before. He then locked the drawer, and retired to bed, leaving the fire smouldering on the hearth.

An hour passed without any event taking place in the kitchen of the farm of Godard; but, at the end of that time, the door of thin planks which led into the little room tenanted by Jean Marais opened gently, and that good youth himself entered, completely dressed.

"Ha, ha!" he murmured to himself, "I have got hold of a secret, have I? I will keep that for service some future day. But now for my present wants. They must be supplied. I cannot stay at Marcilly, that's clear; and I must make my way off as fast as possible. Now, uncle Latouches, I must borrow a few crowns; and, if ever you ask me for payment, your secret, and all you have robbed me of, will be quitance enough, I think!"

As he thus spoke, he produced half-a-dozen keys of different forms out of his pocket, and applied them to the drawer.

They did not succeed in opening it, however; and the youth then brought forth a large knife, with which he speedily contrived to press down the bolt of the lock. The light of the fire was quite sufficient to show him the object of his search; and, making one clear sweep of the contents of the drawer, he opened the door, and in a minute was walking hastily along the fields.

CHAPTER III.

ONCE more we must pass over another lapse of time, comprising three years; and, bringing before the reader again the same four persons who had stood upon the terrace of the Château de Langy on the marriage-day of Gerard Latouches and Marguerite Lemaire, must group them in the saloon of the same château, as they sat down to take their coffee on the evening of a summer's day.

Six years had changed Adele de Langy a good deal; but she was still a pretty and interesting woman, with an expression of great sweetness and tenderness, perhaps heightened by being somewhat paler than before. There is something in the aspect of rosy health rarely combined with great gentleness: it gives the idea of the material, the animal part of our being, predominating over the spiritual. It is not always so, indeed; for there are some faces, full of the high life of this earth, through which the soul seems to look by the eye; and one who gazes at them, and sees the varying expressions which the heart brings over the countenance, feels as if looking at some magnificent building, and beholding beautiful forms passing across the open windows. Adele de Langy, however, had gained rather than lost by her health having been slightly impaired.

Her husband, too, no longer looked the young man: his face had lost its smoothness; there were the lines and stains of exposure and care upon it; and, as he moved to take his seat at the table, a slight degree of lameness was perceptible, from a wound he had received in a skirmish some months before. The beautiful little boy of four years old, who at the period to which we have referred had stood at his mother's knee, was now grown into the tall, pale stripling of ten; somewhat girlish in look and manner, for the great tenderness called for by delicate health had shielded him from those lessons of privation, activity, and exposure which give, even to boyhood, the manly tone so desirable in every one who is to mingle sooner or later with the world.

The person of the whole party who seemed the least changed was the Vicomte de St. Medard; and the only thing which

that you may see him every day, as he says. But we will talk of it by-and-by. There, Victor; drink out your coffee, and go and play in the park: take Francis with you."

The two brothers went forth together, though, it must be owned, unwillingly; and, after they were gone, the coffee and the servants were sent away, so that the marquis and his uncle were left with the marchioness, who by this time had wiped away her tears, and remained silent and grave, but not altogether sorrowful. A momentary pause ensued, as if nobody exactly liked to renew the subject; but it was Madame de Langy who spoke first.

"I have but one fear, my dear uncle," she said, giving Monsieur de St. Medard her hand: "perhaps you divine what it is."

"But you are wrong, Adele," replied Monsieur de St. Medard; "I told you long ago, people who think as I do seek not to make converts. A fool named Vanina once did so, and they burnt him for his pains, as he well deserved. But it is clearly shown that he had no fixed opinions of any kind. He was a weak, vain, foolish man. With myself, and I suppose it is the case with others, my convictions are unwilling and not pleasant to myself; so, depend upon it that I shall not force them upon another. But, my dear Adele, I am ready and willing to promise you that he shall have every instruction you think fit in your own particular doctrines and notions. He will be still your son, though he may be my heir; and I take him but as a loan to cheer my solitude, to enliven my leisure hours, to give me an object and an end in life. I cut him not off from the parent stem: I only seek to bend the young tree over a spot that has been too long scorched by the rays of the sun—my own heart, I mean, Adele. You will not make him a bigot, of course—I know you will not; that were a folly that I could not consent to; but make him, if you will, a sincerely religious man. I can desire nothing better. It is a highly enviable state. I look upon religion—I do not mean bigotry—I look upon religion as one of the most beneficial things that the mind of man ever discovered: it in fact supplies the place of those moral laws which, though immutable and severe in their nature, would be effectual upon very few unless enforced by the despotic voice of religion. I therefore think it but right and just, in the absence of all knowledge as to how the mind of any child will turn out, to give him a sound and calm religious education, in order to ensure that he shall have some principles which will guide him aright, if simple ethics can gain no hold upon him. You shall take every care of his religious education yourself, Adele, and I will interpose neither barrier nor objection. Now are you satisfied?"

"Oh, yes," replied the marchioness; "I am sure you would not pervert him."

Monsieur de St. Medard turned to his nephew with a laugh and a shrug of the shoulders. "You see how she treats me, Victor," he said; "the very best that she can say for me is, that I will not pervert your son. Will you consent to my adopting him?"

"Right gladly, my good uncle," answered the marquis; "I told you so this morning. Only settle upon him a sufficient sum to make him independent under all circumstances; and of course let it be understood, that, in case of anything happening to our poor boy Victor before he marries or comes into his succession, Francis shall be restored to us as the heir of Langy, and I will yield him with pleasure and with gratitude. You will make him a good soldier, I know, and an honest man likewise. One cannot well desire more."

"I will try to make him," said the viscount, with a look of conscious integrity, though not exactly of what is called self-satisfaction; "I will try to make him what I am myself, Victor, in every point but one. I cannot say more; for a man can but endeavour to do those things which he thinks right, and the moral sense with which every man is endowed tells me that I have so acted for some years. My views may be wrong in morals as well as religion; but I do not think they are, and I have acted up to them. I will endeavour to teach him to do the same; for, depend upon it, the man who seeks in all things to do that which is right is seldom without discovering in the end what is really right, even by the very act of seeking it."

The matter was thus settled, and, a few days after, Francis de Langy accompanied the viscount to his estate of St. Medard. He was not told that he was thenceforth to be comparatively a stranger to his father's house. Had he been so, perhaps his boyish imagination even might have taken fright at the severing of all those sweet ties with which the kind hand of Nature has attached us to the bosom of paternal love. He might have felt, early as were his years, that there is no tenderness like that which God himself ordained to be the soft resting-place of infancy; that the cradle of our best affections is a mother's heart; that the most impene-trable shelter against the storms of the world are a father's arms. He might have felt it, though not known it; for feeling goes before experience, and outstrips reason. It is the instinct of man, given him as a safeguard for those early years, before the gifts which are bestowed upon him to direct his manhood can be brought into operation; before intellect, from the materials furnished by memory out of the past, forges an ægis to guard his breast against the future.

They told him not, then; and he went joyfully, as if for a visit for a few days. All was new to him, all was happy, and ere he felt the change, the change was effected. His uncle was all kindness, and the hours passed pleasantly away. Monsieur de St. Medard, with a lively recollection of all that had been imperfect and all that had been painful in his own education, took care that nothing of the kind should be felt by the beautiful boy whom he had adopted; and studying his character with an anxious eye, and a keen and discriminating mind, he prepared to repress all that promised dangerous fruit, and to cultivate the many fine and hopeful qualities which were apparent in his disposition.

During the first three or four months, Madame de Langy visited her son almost every day; but, at the end of that time, the season of the capital returned; and, though she and her husband both might have been better pleased to stay at their château, custom, the great god of France, carried them unwillingly to Paris.

Purposely the Viscount de St. Medard remained in the country; for he was anxious to wean Madame de Langy, as he expressed it, from her child. Two months effected the object that he wished; that is to say, the lapse of time did not diminish her love or her tenderness in the least, but it broke through the habit of seeing him frequently; and when, at length, her uncle and his adopted son followed to Versailles, where the court then was, she herself abstained from that daily intercourse with the boy which she knew could not always go on, and which she had found it so painful to interrupt. The little Francis himself had already become reconciled to his situation, for his uncle had always been the object of his warmest love; nor was his affection diminished, even in the least degree, by finding that Monsieur de St. Medard, though kind and indulgent, would not, to use the ordinary term, spoil him in the least. The viscount never harassed him by manifold exactions; there were few things that were prohibited to him; there were few things that were required of him; but the directions which he had once received, he soon learned, must be obeyed to the letter; and though his nature was impetuous, and his heart full of ardent feelings, yet those feelings were, if I may so express it, thoughtful in their character, and, even as a boy, he would say to himself, "I will do as my uncle bids me, because he is so kind."

Ere I close this chapter, to turn to another page in the history of this boy's life, I must pause for a moment to give a picture of a person who, though not one of the principal characters in this book, had a great influence on the fate of Francis de Langy. I do not mean merely his material fate:

I mean the fate of his mind; and, though readers in general are not fond of this sort of portrait-painting, yet I must beg them to pause with me for a moment, assuring them that, however unskilfully the sketch may be executed, it is from nature; and I give it as much in justice to a particular class from which we do not in general expect much good, as to a nation from which we do not expect much sincere feeling. I speak of a French *bonne*, or nursery-maid.

Louise Pelet had been engaged by Madame de Langy to take charge of her youngest son on his return to his home from the *Ferme Godard*. She came from the house of a relation of the marquis, with whom she could never agree, but who gave her a character for perfect honesty, sobriety, and another virtue for which her class are not in general very conspicuous. The lady acknowledged, however, in recommending her to Madame de Langy, that Louise had "a desperate temper."

But Madame de Langy knew that her fair cousin was excessively weak, excessively vain, and excessively capricious; It was admitted that Louise was extremely fond of children, and did not show her bad temper with them: and consequently Adele imagined that a more reasonable mistress might make a more reasonable maid. She was not mistaken: Louise became devotedly attached to the boy; and though she was what is usually termed *free-spoken* to her mistress, expressing her opinion in the very plainest terms when it was sought for, and sometimes when it was not, she was nevertheless perfectly respectful and obedient. She was not fond of her fellow-servants, it is true, and got out of their way with great perseverance and success; but she was neither a tale-bearer nor a slanderer of others, holding her tongue very discreetly when they were absent, though occasionally expressing not very favourable views of their conduct to their face. She was, moreover, activity itself; always employed, never idle, and doing everything with a rapidity and promptitude which did not in the least interfere with neatness of execution. Blithe and cheerful was she always, too, which is one of the best and most necessary qualifications in a person employed about children; for the heart of man in his early years is like one of those prepared plates, invented in our own days, which take a permanent print of the objects placed before them without any operation of man's hands to draw the outline or induce the light and shade. If our minds are, as we are told by great philosophers, but bundles of ideas, the objects that surround us in infancy—when our first impressions, which form the foundation of all the after structure, are acquired—can be of no slight importance, and the cheerfulness and contented cha-

racter of the persons placed about a child have undoubtedly a powerful influence in giving the same happy tone to his after disposition.

But the most remarkable point in the character of Louise Pelet remains yet to be told. As one of her fellow-servants said of her, "she was destitute of amiable weaknesses." It was very generally admitted by her companions that she had never had a *faiblesse* for any one; and it seemed, moreover, that she was resolved never to have a *tendresse* either; so that grooms and coachmen, footmen and valets, nay, butlers and cooks themselves, assaulted her heart in vain. At the greater part she laughed, which is undoubtedly the best manner of extinguishing unwished-for love; but at the rest, if they persisted, she grew angry and impatient, and indeed showed very little compassion for the sufferers from the tender passion. Her indifference towards mankind proceeded from no neglect which she had met with from the other sex, for she certainly had been a very attractive personage, with a neat figure, a pretty foot and ankle, and good eyes and teeth; and even at the time that she entered the household of Madame de Langy, in her smart lace-cap, her little characteristic jacket and her red petticoat, she was still pleasant to look on, although she had passed her thirtieth year. Louise was, moreover, a sincere and devout Roman Catholic; that is to say, she had a strong sense of religion, and of course adhered to the doctrines in which she had been brought up. She heard mass whenever she had an opportunity; she fasted sturdily upon all days appointed for that purpose; and, although she had great powers of abstinence, she got thin upon the rigid observance of Lent, and somewhat pale before Easter-day. She confessed at the regular times and seasons; but it was always remarked that after confession she was more placable and less sharp in her replies than usual; and consequently Madame de Langy imagined that errors in temper formed the great bulk of her sins, and were the especial faults which the worthy priest thought fit to point out for amendment. Louise was a very sensible as well as a very conscientious person, and, having a clear insight into her own little weaknesses, she was always anxious to conquer them. Nevertheless she was not a bigot, hated hypocrisy, in matters of religion endeavoured to prevent her left hand from knowing what her right did, made her fasting and her prayer both in secret, would hear even a priest blamed with perfect composure, and tolerated a jest at any of the many absurdities with which the folly of men had overloaded her church.

Such was the personage to whom Madame de Langy had confided the care of her younger son; and, when the little

boy was adopted by Monsieur de St. Medard, she stipulated that Louise Pellet should accompany him. The viscount consented willingly enough, as the presence of Louise relieved his mind of the only embarrassment which he anticipated; and, after she had been with him a short time, the esteem he felt for her was so great, that he resolved, if willing to stay, she would never quit his house, even after her charge of the boy was over.

For her part, Louise loved and respected her new master; and the only observation she was ever known to make in his dispraise was, "It is a pity that he is such a fool as to have no religion, when so good a thing is to be got at every corner."

CHAPTER IV.

YEARS passed with Francis de Langy: the bark of life floated along the stream of time, filled with all the merry crew of boyhood, shouting on their way at every rock and angle that they turned, singing gay songs at the ripple of the waves, laughing at those whom they left upon the bank, though opening their eyes with astonishment here and there, at the wrecks which they beheld in those seemingly quiet waters.

Years passed by, and Monsieur de St. Medard's hair grew greyer. Victor and Adele de Langy fell into the slough of middle life. Their son, the young count, became a youth, imitating the faults and follies of men, tasting the first intoxicating drops of vice, and promising to pain his parents' hearts with more than an ordinary share of errors and weaknesses. Their eyes often turned with longing and affection towards their second son, Francis, now somewhat past fourteen years of age, and unusually tall, strong, and powerful for his period of life. He was strikingly handsome in person, too; and the eyes of Adele saw in his noble features, and still more noble expression, a promise that he would grow up with higher objects and pursuits than his brother, and make up, in pride and satisfaction to his father and herself, for the sorrows and anxieties which Victor was bringing upon them.

The character of the boy seemed fully to justify her in such hopes. The bold, frank openness of his disposition, which was the first thing that had won the love of his father's uncle, had never left him. He was fearless in all things, candid in all things; he knew not what a falsehood is; he scarcely conceived it possible to tell one. With nothing to conceal, and with nothing to dread, truth was the first habit of his mind; and with truth there was of course cheerfulness.

What is there that should prevent the heart from beating free when there is not a fetter upon it? But, although he was perfectly gay, happy, and contented, the continual society of Monsieur de St. Medard had, of course, produced its effect upon the young Francis de Langy. It gave him a thoughtful turn even in his gaiety. His light-heartedness was not without reflection; his very cheerfulness proceeded from the pleasantness of his thoughts, not from the absence of them; so that he was, in fact, in mind as well as in body, more advanced than his years. It might be that the course of education which Monsieur de St. Medard pursued with him had produced the same effect upon his corporeal and his mental powers, for the viscount had taught him to examine the opinions he received, to investigate, to analyze, to combine; and at the same time that he had given him these exercises for the mind, he had instructed him, or caused him to be instructed, in all those bodily exercises which strengthen the muscles and develop the powers of the human frame. At fourteen he was master of almost all weapons, an excellent swimmer, a good horseman, an unerring shot; and, as grace is the child of strength married to activity, there were few persons in whom that quality was more remarkable than in the boy whose course we have been tracing.

There was but one subject of daily interest on which Monsieur de St. Medard never spoke with his adopted son, and that was religion. With conscientious adherence to his word, he not only avoided throwing any doubts as stumbling-blocks in the young man's way, but he himself engaged a clergyman of irreproachable character, a man of sense, of learning, and of firmness, to act as his constant instructor, and to stay with him in the house. The Abbé Arnoux had travelled far, had seen many nations, had mingled with philosophers as well as ecclesiastics, had heard many opinions discussed, combated, and defended, and, remaining calmly firm in those which he at first received, was fully prepared to support them at all times against attack, whatever form it might assume. The viscount, in short, could not have chosen any one so capable of guarding his adopted son against his own peculiar notions as the person he gave him for a tutor; and, at the same time that he did so, he himself obtained for a companion one of the few men, as he expressed it, with whom he could converse reasonably. With the abbé, however, from delicacy of feeling, he abstained from all conversation on religion, as he did with his nephew from respect to his word; and but for the fact of his never setting his foot within the doors of a church, or attending upon any of the ordinances of religion, the boy would not have discovered that his kind relation differed from the rest of the world in his

religious views. True it is, he took no great notice of the matter, and the Abbé Arnoux was a great deal too wise and too virtuous to call the attention of his pupil to what he looked upon as a lamentable error in the mind of their mutual benefactor.

Thus had proceeded the course of Francis de Langy's life up to the period when, having passed the age of sixteen, it seemed necessary to Monsieur de Medard to give him a more general knowledge of the world; for, alas! that is a book which every man must study sooner or later, and he who has not some knowledge of it can never take a first place in the class into which he has been put. The viscount having now formally adopted his nephew—a proceeding surrounded with more legal securities in France, at least at that time, than is admissible in England—the king bestowed upon him the title of Baron de St. Medard, which he would have borne had he been actually the son of his father by adoption; and accompanied by the Abbé Arnoux, with two servants, Monsieur de St. Medard and Francis de Langy set out on a tour through their native land.

It was in the spring of the year, but the spring far advanced and touching upon summer—a season which in Paris and its neighbourhood is perhaps the most disagreeable, on account of the cloud of dust which hangs constantly in the air. The steps of the travellers were directed in the first place towards the celebrated baths of the Mount d'Or, in order to reach which, as they varied their course according to the objects that they desired to see, they passed through a very interesting portion of the kingdom. But as this work is neither intended for a descriptive tour, nor an account of the principal manufactures of the eastern provinces of France, I shall hurry on with them towards Auvergne, which they approached in the beginning of the month of June.

Monsieur de St. Medard, although he had not prevented his adopted son from visiting any town which was worth his notice in the neighbourhood of their direct road, had nevertheless lost but little time by the way; for a latent desire of seeing some old and beloved friends had, perhaps, directed his journey to Auvergne in the first place, and now somewhat quickened his movements, without his being aware that such was the case. It were trite to tell the reader that the causes of one-half of our actions are unknown to us; for every man, who has at all examined his own mind, must have discovered that very often the motive most apparent to himself at the time was not the real one. But we may go a little farther, and say, that, even when we do consider the principal motive, we seldom, if ever, perceive all those accessory causes which modify it in its course between conception and

execution. The heart of man is a well of secrets, from which we bring up but one bucketful at a time; and truth—that is, the whole truth—still lies at the bottom.

Francis de Langy had hitherto been busy with the most material things of life; for there are various shades of substantiality in all that we deal with. First, there is the actual matter of the world, and the mere physical actions and enjoyments which spring from the exercises of our corporeal frame, from the indulgence of any of our animal appetites—the operation of matter upon matter. Then come, as another grand class of human objects and pursuits, those movements of the mind and their subjects, which, though not actually dealing with corporeal substances, nevertheless are not independent of them, taking from them their indications and their terms. This comprises all the sciences, and many of the arts. A third class is still more refined and subtle in its nature and objects. Though matter must always mingle more or less, while we hold this mixed being, with all our thoughts and feelings, yet the imaginative powers of the mind are certainly those which receive less aid from the material world in which we live, and have more of the operations of the spirit in them, than any other of our faculties. The most abstract workings of the intellect—those, for instance, which have for their object the eternal truths of the mathematics, which would be if the worlds were not—still are forced to have recourse to material forms, and ideas borrowed from them, for the mind of man to be able to conceive them at all. But the thrilling sensations of the soul—the thoughts of the spirit, which are feelings—when awakened by fine music or called forth by some wide and magnificent scene, deal not at all with the mere material objects presented to our corporeal senses, but receive as it were an answer, a message from heaven. Rightly directed, wisely used, imagination is the greatest gift and blessing of intellectual man. Whether he will or not, it mingles more or less with almost all his acts and almost all his pleasures. But how it may be taught to elevate and purify all these enjoyments, would man but give the due ascendancy to the finer essence, and suffer it to direct his corporeal energies! How it might raise his tastes! how it might soften his feelings! how it might purify his desires! how it might ennoble his nature! how it might dignify his life! how it might tranquillize his death! for imagination must ever be an ingredient in that power by which we realise to ourselves “the substance of things not seen.” To him who has imagination well directed, the whole universe and all its vicissitudes are but an instrument of eternal music, and the hand of God producing infinite harmony at every touch.

Francis de Langy had, as I have said, dealt hitherto with

the more material things of life. Sciences he had studied, arts he had learned, athletic sports and vigorous exercises he had enjoyed; but imagination had received but little culture and a small supply of food. A new world of sensations was about to be presented to him; a spirit that slumbered in his bosom was about to be roused; and the touch that awoke her from her sleep was from the hand of Nature.

The three travellers had passed the night at a small and uncomfortable inn—dirty, neglected, and ill furnished; and, rising early from beds which offered no inducement to remain longer in them than was absolutely necessary, they set out about five o'clock in the morning, intending to go on foot to Clermont, and thence to the Mont d'Or. A thick fog hung over the whole scene for the first two hours of their journey; but at length, after having changed horses in the small town of Aigueperse, they climbed on foot the high hill just beyond that place, while the carriage followed, and some signs of the mist dispersing began to appear ere they reached the top. The Abbé Arnoux was expressing his regret that they should be cut off from the beautiful view of Limagne which the top of the mountain displays, and cited some lines from Gregory of Tours, which afford perhaps the first record that we possess of a strong sense of picturesque beauty in one of the barbarous kings of the middle ages.

"Just such a misfortune as that which has befallen us to-day," said the abbé, "befel Childibert more than a thousand years ago. That was very natural; but what was not quite so much to be expected is the fact, that poor Childibert felt the disappointment as much as we can do, though he had no Claude Lorraine to instruct his eyes in the details of picturesque beauty."

"I think we shall be more fortunate than the king, abbé," said the viscount; "for, if I mistake not, the mist does not go beyond this side of the mountain. Do you not see the yellow sunshine there, appearing in a long line upon the edge of the sky, like the golden fringe upon the hangings of a throne? The wind sets from that quarter, too; so, take my word for it, we shall have it fine."

"If we were to stop for a minute," said the abbé. "we might, perhaps, have the view from the top; and, in the mean time, look here at this large square stone, one of the traces of a civilization passed away, as great, or perhaps greater than our own. We think that the art of printing will prove the elixir of life to our state of being, and render all our inventions, discoveries, and improvements immortal. A thousand to one the hands which erected these mile-stones so many centuries ago thought that the glory of the Roman name had in it as strong a principle of immortality, and that,

embalmed in that mighty preservative, all her arts would be transmitted to every after age without decay or loss. "*Tiberius Claudius, Drusi filius, Cæsar, Augustus, Germanicus, Tribunitia potestate quinquies, Imperator undecies, Pater patriæ, Consul tertium, Consul designatus quartum,*" &c." continued the abbé, reading with antiquarian ease the letters on the old Roman milestone. "The possessor of all these pompous titles, depend upon it, little thought that the pride of Rome would one day be but a page out of a half-forgotten history."

"But, at all events," said the viscount, "you will allow, my good friend, that the art of printing is a vast safeguard to all our present discoveries and arts."

"I really do not know," replied the abbé. "I believe the copies made by hand of many of the celebrated works now utterly lost were as numerous in proportion to the population as those produced by printing; and, if we look into any catalogue of books, we shall find many of them—though printed within a very few years of the present time—which are now scarcely to be procured; some of which there is only one copy known to exist; others, printed less than two hundred years ago, famous in their day and eagerly sought for now, of which only the title has descended to us. No, no; we can perpetuate nothing: there is no such thing as immortality on this side the grave."

"Or on the other," said the viscount in a low tone, as if speaking to himself.

But, nevertheless, Francis de Langy caught the words, and turned round with a sudden start. Monsieur de St. Medard perceived his surprise, and, vexed with himself for having been betrayed into such a speech, walked on, saying, "Come, Francis. Come, Monsieur Arnoux: the carriage will be at the top of the hill long before us, if we stay here discussing old monuments.—But you see I was right: the mists have nearly cleared away."

"Would to God they had!" thought the abbé; but he was more careful than Monsieur de St. Medard had been, and uttered not aloud even a word that might shake the respect of Francis de Langy towards the viscount.

He followed slowly, however; while the youth, with his light active limbs, hurried on before. The abbé's eyes were bent upon the ground, his whole look grave and thoughtful; and Monsieur de St. Medard, pausing for an instant, laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "I forgot myself, Arnoux, but I trust it has done no harm. You know that I would not counteract your efforts by a word."

"I am sure you would not," replied the abbé; "but let me ask once, and only once, my dear sir, whether, feeling as you do that such tenets are in themselves an evil you

would not inflict on one you love—whether, I say, it would not be better to endeavour to free your own mind from them?”

The viscount smiled. “It would take a long while, my dear abbé, to give you my reasons,” he answered; “but first let me point to you an objection which is unanswerable: that, having discovered the truth, a sane man can never abandon it. His convictions must remain the same, whatever be his inclinations.”

“Can truth, then,” said the abbé, “ever be so evil a thing that he who is perfectly sure of possessing it withholds it as a poison from those he loves? My friend, I should doubt the genuineness of the drug. I should think that it was some noxious composition, decorated with the title of a precious balm.”

“It is the state of society,” replied the viscount, “which renders that dangerous which is in itself good, as wholesome food and generous wine are death to a man in a fever.”

“Nay, Monsieur de St. Medard,” said the abbé, “I have heard you yourself own that there is more happiness, in life and in death, to be derived from what you call the dreams of religion than from the most calm state of philosophical atheism.”

The viscount nodded his head.

“Well, then,” continued the abbé, “I will quote the words of one whom you allow to be the wisest man that ever lived, and whom I think wiser than *any man* that ever lived. He told us that you should know a tree by its fruit, and I contend with Him that a good tree will bring forth good fruit. It is worth some thought, my friend and benefactor, for every man to ask himself with Pilate, ‘What is truth?’ for it is upon that which depends eternity.”

The viscount made no answer, but walked on musing, and at the top of the hill they found Francis de Laugy gazing with a look of wild enthusiasm upon the magnificent scene that lay spread out before him. His whole features seemed lighted up, his quivering lips were apart, the glow in his cheek was heightened, his very breath withheld. It was the first time in his young life that he had been strongly affected by the beauty of the earth he dwelt on, and now it seemed to come upon him all at once: the impression of a mighty power in nature which he had never known before, but which instantly found a responsive spirit in his own heart, and roused imagination within him, never to sleep again.

The land'scape he looked upon was indeed most beautiful. The mist, rising like a curtain, hid the tops of the hills; but the sun, not yet half-way up to the highest point of his

course, poured a flood of radiance over the plain, or rather valley, of Limagne, which lay enchased like a rich jewel, reflecting the morning light with a thousand hues, in the midst of the golden mountains of Auvergne.

Who can describe the first sight of that fair land in the early day, with its innumerable undulations, its banks, its rocks, its soft green pastures, its woods, its dells, its castles, and its thousand streams? At that moment, too, it was perhaps as lovely as ever it was seen: various things have since made changes, greatly to the diminution of its beauty: many of the chateaux are gone which once topped the hills; many of the old castles have fallen to the ground; the dull straight walls of manufactories have here and there disfigured the sweetest parts of the valley; and the progress of a destructive revolution, as well as the advance of arts and the increase of population, has changed its aspect for the worse. Then nature was supreme: and if man's works were there—if the towers of a distant town met the eye in one direction, or the pinnacles of an old country-house were seen in another—they were but as children nestling in a mother's breast; while the decaying walls of feudal buildings on the rocks and mountains, from which their grey and moss-covered stones could with difficulty be distinguished, seemed to blend both nature and art and past and present, together in one sweet harmony. At that moment, too, the dewy mist, from out its jewelled treasury, had scattered living diamonds over the whole plain; and the bright sun, triumphing over the retiring vapours, gathered them as spoils while they glittered in his beams.

Light and loveliness were before the young man's eyes; and as he gazed, a spring bird in its full song of love burst forth from a tree that overhung the road, and added another voice to the grand music of the whole.

The viscount and Arnoux paused by his side: neither spoke for a moment, for to them the wonder and enjoyment of the young, bright being before them were as beautiful as the scene, and indeed its climax. It wanted but the sight of such high, pure delight to make it perfect.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW miles beyond Riom the travellers once more descended from the carriage, though at this time there was no picturesque beauty of any peculiar character to attract them. The sole inducements to travel on foot were a steep hill (which the new road avoids), and the relief given by a

change of position. The scenery, indeed, was pleasant enough in its way, as the carriage was at the time passing through one of those large woods so common in France, which, though principally planted for the sake of profit, add not a little to the beauty of the country and the comfort of the traveller. The trees were old and fine; the frequent streamlets of Auvergne rendered the shades musical with the voice of falling waters; and all the little accidents of rock, and broken bank, and rustic chapel, and greensward brake, were there, to please the eye as the party walked along.

"That path cuts off half the hill," said one of the postillions, pointing with his whip, and speaking in the *patois* of his country; "it takes you, too, by St. Mary's chapel and fountain, which so many people go to see."

"Well, then, I think we will go too," replied the viscount. "We are for seeing all sights: are we not, Francis?"

"Oh, yes, let us see everything that can be seen," cried the eager youth; and on he went at a rapid pace along the path to which the man pointed, and upon which the viscount and the abbé followed him more slowly. It was one of those small narrow paths through a wood, which, to me at least, are so full of temptation that I can scarcely pass by the end of one of them, and gaze down into the green light and shade that it displays, without being seduced to quit the plain highway, and track its winding course at any risk. Alas, reader! they are, too, like the sweet byways that branch off at every step from the common road of life: very, very pleasant at their commencement, but too often rough and dangerous before they close, and leading us to things we never dreamt of, and from which it is very difficult to return.

Such, however, was not the case in the present instance. The path continued even and good; a great part of the steep ascent of hill was saved, and the walk was shady and cool, with the trees close enough to hide the traveller from the sun, but not to impede the free air from refreshing his cheek as he walked along. The ground all round, too, was covered with forest flowers, which are so very much more beautiful in France than in this country; and with the strong, impetuous step of youth, which still hurries forward to the exhaustion of all joys, Francis de Langy sped on before his two more aged companions, and was ere long lost to their sight in the turnings of the wood. They could hear his steps, however, for the hard ground echoed the tread; but in a minute or two the sound of his footfall suddenly ceased, and the next instant a loud shout from his well-known voice met their ear.

"Quick, quick! come hither!" he cried; "come hither!"

and, hastening forward, they found him kneeling down beside the inanimate form of a girl apparently about his own age.

She was evidently of the higher ranks of society; and though as pale as death, and in fact to all appearance dead, yet, as her head rested upon the arm of the young Baron de St. Medard, with her eyes closed, and the long black lashes resting on her cheek, the beautiful line of the eyebrow clear and defined on the clear marble skin, the rich brown hair falling back from the forehead, the delicate mouth with the bloodless lips apart, and the brilliant white teeth glistening below, a more lovely and interesting countenance was never beheld, even amongst the ancient statues which she looked so like. Her dress was fine, though simple: a golden cross and chain were round her neck; her bonnet, which she seemed to have been carrying in her hand, had dropped beside her; and her garments were only so far discomposed by her fall as to display one small foot and beautiful ankle. She seemed to have received no injury of any kind, but appeared to have fallen down suddenly, either dead or fainting.

Francis de Langy was but little familiar with death, and, as he saw her lie so still, he thought that the spirit was gone for ever; but the Abbé Arnoux and the viscount were more acquainted with such things, and the former, kneeling down beside her, soon pronounced that she had merely fainted.

"They talked of a fountain," he said; "let us carry her thither;" and, the moment he had spoken the words, his pupil, without waiting for any assistance, caught her up in his strong young arms, and ran on with her along the path.

At the distance of less than a couple of hundred yards there was a little opening in the wood, with the small shrine of an antique date, in a chaste and simple style of Gothic architecture, displaying a figure of St. Mary Magdalen behind an iron grating. At the foot of the shrine, and only separated from it by a sufficient space for two or three varieties to kneel, was a basin of stone, which seemed as if it had once been the upper part of a font in some church of the middle ages; but now, pierced at the bottom to receive the water from below it, it formed a beautiful little well, over the edge of which a small and perfectly limpid stream flowed away down the rock, and lost itself in the wood.

It was by the side of this fountain that Francis de Langy stopped; and, laying his fair burden down upon the grass, he had sprinkled her face with water before the viscount and the abbé came up. She did not revive, indeed; but a slight movement of the features filled the boy's heart with joy, by convincing him that she still breathed; and when the abbé joined him he exclaimed, "She is living! Oh, yes, she is living indeed!"

The good man smiled. "I never doubted it, Francis," he said. "She will come to herself soon. Do not raise her head; she will be better as she is. We must sprinkle her face again with the tears of St. Magdalen, as the people call this water. You rub her hands, Francis;" and, filling his hollowed palm out of the fountain, the abbé cast the cold liquid suddenly on her face and bosom.

A gasp as for breath succeeded; and the youth, taking one of the fair small hands in his, chafed it gently, but anxiously, with somewhat new sensations, as he felt that smooth, marble-like touch, and gazed upon those beautiful features. They were strange sensations, innocent, and pure, and guileless—calm and cold, indeed, as that soft hand itself, but different from anything that he had ever known before. He had loved his father, his mother, and him who had adopted him; he had felt deep interest towards them, affection, tenderness, gratitude; but it had always been with a looking up, with a reverence for, with a dependence upon them; and, with the heart of man it is not for those to whom we lift our eyes that we experience the deepest tenderness—it is for those placed a step below us. The sensations of pity, the power of aiding, protecting, defending, supporting, were all new to the bosom of Francis de Langy; and he now felt the thrill of them for the first time. It was as a supplement to the new spirit which had been aroused within him that day by the first sight of Limagne. Imagination—tenderness—what wanted he more of manhood? Love! and that was to come ere long.

Their care was not long in producing its effect. Two or three long-drawn sighs, and a slight shudder, soon showed that sensation was returning to the fair object of their solicitude; and in about five minutes more she opened her eyes, still faintly, and turned them from the one to the other. The first thing they rested on was the soft and ruddy face of youth; the next was the fine countenance of Monsieur de St. Medard, full of calm, grave thought; the next was the mild, benevolent aspect of the Abbé Arnoux; and the poor girl seemed to receive from each some especial comfort and assurance, for a gentle smile came upon her lip as she raised herself slightly upon her arm.

"Lie still, my dear young lady; lie still!" said the ecclesiastic; "you will soon be better. You are amongst friends."

She suffered her head to droop back again upon the grass, and once more closed her eyes, which were of a deep, deep blue; but the increasing colour in her lips, and the faint rose that began to spread over her cheek, like the first blush of dawn in the pale morning sky, showed that the heart was

beating more freely, and sending the warm current of life through the veins from which it had been withdrawn.

Oh! how beautiful did she look! and with what intense admiration did Francis de Langy gaze, as the change took place! It was like the statue of the Greek sculptor, when, warming to the prayer of love, the cold limbs softened into life. In a few minutes she once more opened her eyes, and her lips moved. "I am better," she said; "thank you, I am better. I can get back again home now."

"Nay, nay; stay a moment," replied the viscount; "try your strength first, young lady, and when you are quite recovered we will aid you home. Is it far?"

"Oh, no," she answered, raising herself again upon her arm, and looking down the path by which they had come, with somewhat anxious and apprehensive eyes; "it is very near—not a quarter of a league; but I can go on now, and I would fain get back to the chateau."

The viscount and the abbé aided her to rise, while Francis de Langy stood near and gazed, for a sudden timidity had come upon him, he knew not why. But at length he burst suddenly forth, on seeing her look around as if seeking for something; and exclaiming, "Oh! we left it behind where we found you—we forgot it," he darted down the path.

Some sudden emotion, however, seemed to seize their fair companion, and she cried, "Oh, no, no! Do not go, do not go! Not that way!" while her cheek turned pale again, and a look of terror came over her whole countenance.

"What is the matter?" demanded the viscount. "Is there any danger there? Has any one injured or attacked you?"

"No," she replied in a broken and confused manner, "no; I saw something that frightened me, and—~~and~~—I faint, I suppose; for I felt sick, and then everything disappeared."

"Perhaps playing the truant a little, my child?" said the abbé.

"Oh, no!" she answered, colouring, and turning her dark blue eyes full upon him. "My mother sent me. I often walk through all these woods alone."

"What was it frightened you, then?" asked the viscount. But she cast down her eyes; the colour left her face; and, before any more questions could be put to her, Francis de Langy was seen coming rapidly back, carrying her bonnet in his hand.

"Now, my child," said the Abbé Arnoux, "take the arm of Monsieur de St. Medard, and let us guide you home. You must direct us on the way, however, for we do not know it."

"Either path will take us to the château," replied the young lady, "but we had better take this one;" and, receiving her bonnet from the hands of the young baron, she thanked him in a low voice, while she raised her eyes to the face of Monsieur de St. Medard, as if asking, "Shall we go on?"

The viscount led her on the path before them, while the abbé, seeing that she still walked feebly, supported her on the other side; and Francis de Langy followed. His uncle, however, turned his eyes from time to time to their fair companion's face with a thoughtful and contemplative look; and at length, just as they were coming within sight of the high-road, he said, "I cannot but think, mademoiselle, that by a strange chance this pretty hand that leans upon my arm is near akin to some I deeply love. May I ask whose child you are?"

She looked up in his face with an expression which was not explained for many years, and replied, "My mother is the Countess d'Artonne."

The viscount took her hand in his, and pressed his lips upon it.

"I thought so," he said; "at your age she was very like you."

"Oh, but she was very beautiful!" cried the girl; "I am sure she was very beautiful."

The viscount smiled, and so did the good Abbé Arnoux; but the former only answered, "She was, indeed;" and then observed, "You speak of your mother only; but your father alive and well, I hope." He was so not a month ago, for I heard from him then."

Once more she had turned somewhat pale; but she replied, "Oh, yes, my father is well, and here."

The viscount marked the changing expression of her countenance, and he asked himself, "Can D'Artonne be a harsh father?—he, who was so full of deep, I may almost say passionate, fondness for those he loved? Oh, no! that can never be," he added in his own thoughts; and then, turning to her again, he demanded, "Is the château to which you are now returning the one you usually inhabit, Mademoiselle d'Artonne? I thought it was on the other side of Clémont."

"No; we always live here," she answered. "I recollect once being at Capelet, but it was only for a month. The Château d'Artonne is here above, and the village lies down there below. I have just come in from it;" and, after having spoken, she fell into thought again, till the viscount stopped by the side of the carriage, which was waiting for them at the mouth of the little path.

"It will be better, fair lady," he said, "for us all to get in and drive up to the château; for I have long promised your father a visit, and intended to-morrow to go to his house from Clermont."

Mademoiselle d'Artonne made no objection; and, the whole party being seated in the vehicle, the postilions drove on quickly, and in five minutes more were in the court of the château.

On visiting the house of a French gentleman of the present day, if the door be open, which is frequently the case, one may very often walk into an empty hall and knock at half-a-dozen different doors without finding a servant to answer inquiries, or conduct a stranger to the master or mistress of the house. Such, however, was not the case before the Revolution: and it is necessary to compare the two periods together whenever we wish to estimate the proportion of Americanism that has been infused into the habits of Frenchmen. I say Americanism advisedly; for republicanism is a very different thing, and does not imply a rejection of refinement in the higher classes of society, or want of due attention and respect for those who employ them in the lower. In those days, in the house of every gentleman of wealth and distinction, two or three servants in full costume were to be found waiting in the vestibule to receive any visitors who might appear, and to answer all inquiries. If they were not much better than the servants of our own times in France, they were not much worse, and certainly were very much more pleasant in their demeanour. In the present instance, no sooner did the carriage stop at the door, than two of them instantly presented themselves, but appeared not a little surprised on seeing their young lady handed out by two strange gentlemen.

Mademoiselle d'Artonne had now recovered herself completely; and mixing timid inexperience, not ungraceful in itself, with habits of ease and youthful confidence, which are always graceful, she led the viscount and his companions forward through the vestibule and the hall beyond, to a small painted and gilded room where her mother usually sat.

The countess was there, as her daughter expected, but rose on seeing three strangers, and gazed with an inquiring eye upon the face of Monsieur de St. Medard as he advanced. The next instant, however, her whole face lighted up, and she exclaimed, "Charles de St. Medard, is it you? This is indeed a pleasure. Julie, call your father. Call him quickly, love!"

The colour had fluttered upon the cheek of Monsieur de St. Medard, like that which we see coming and going in the face of an inexperienced girl at the sudden presence of some

one whom she loves; but he stayed Mademoiselle d'Artonne as she was about to go, saying, "You had better send a servant, dear lady; my fair young friend here needs repose and care. We found her fainting in the wood; something had frightened her.

All a mother's anxieties were instantly in arms, and the countess questioned her daughter eagerly as to what could have created such alarm. Julie either would not or could not tell, however. She blushed, turned pale, and faltered: "She could not say," she replied, "'twas something in the bushes; she saw it but faintly;" and her reluctance, while it excited her mother's curiosity, was evidently too strong and too painful for Madame d'Artonne to press her more at that moment.

She turned then to Monsieur de St. Medard, asked him manifold questions regarding his fate and happiness during the last seventeen or eighteen years, welcomed the Abbé Arnoux and his young charge, and, gazing in the face of Francis de Langy, remarked, turning to the viscount, "He is very like your elder brother."

While she was still speaking, the door opened, and a fine, tall, powerful man of the middle age, dressed in a hunting-coat of green with gold lace about it, entered the boudoir, and instantly clasped the hand of his friend St. Medard, saluting him and his two companions after the ordinary habit of France.

"Julie has been frightened, D'Artonne," said the countess; "frightened by something, she will not say what, and fainted in the wood."

The count turned to his daughter with a look of eager anxiety. "Indeed, my dear Julie!" he cried, holding out his arms towards her; "come to your father, my beloved child. I have scarce seen you to-day. Come to my heart, my Julie—come!"

Julie hesitated, turned pale, and then red, and then, casting herself into her father's arms, burst into tears; while the count pressed her to his bosom with tenderness and warmth which left no doubt of the strength of his affection. Both father and mother now applied themselves to soothe her, and she soon regained her tranquillity; but the Countess d'Artonne thought it would be better for her to lie down to repose for a few hours, and she left the party in the boudoir for that purpose. The count mused as his daughter quitted the room; and the countess said, "It is very strange what can have alarmed Julie in this manner—she has in general such firm nerves. Some bear or some wolf, perhaps; but then, why not say so?"

"Very likely an ideal terror, madam," observed the Abbé

Arnoux; "and the fear of being laughed at may perhaps be the cause of her silence."

"I know not," answered the countess; "but she has usually no terrors of any kind. However, it is very strange, and I will question her closely when she is somewhat recovered."

"You had better not, my dear wife," replied the count. "Leave the sweet girl to her own discretion. In our house, St. Medard, we all trust each other; and none of us ever had cause to think that trust misplaced."

"Confidence is the first duty of noble minds," said the viscount. "It is only the weak and the narrow-minded who, from the somewhat hard lessons of the world, acquire the false wisdom of doubting those who never deserved it."

The count gazed at him with a bright smile. "That is so like the St. Medard of other days!" he exclaimed; "but the St. Medard of other days is the St. Medard of to-day also. I see you old bachelors are made of unchangeable stuff; but we, who bring domestic sweets about us, get softened and kneaded into new forms. But come, St. Medard: you shall stay a month with us, and see whether the pleasant spectacle of home and family happiness, even in France, may not teach you at length to try your fate in the same way."

The viscount laughed and shook his head. "Nay, nay," he answered; "two-and-fifty years, D'Artonne, are quite sufficient to harden one, as you call it; into a crust that nothing can soften. Besides, here is my son already; and I am afraid that my good friend the Abbe Arnoux must supply the place of the lady of the mansion. But we will spend a week with you, D'Artonne, and see all the fair things of Auvergne, if you will show them to us. After that, we must speed on upon our way, for I must take Francis here through one-half of France before the winter sets in. The other we must visit next summer."

The count smiled, and vowed that he would detain them longer; and to this conversation succeeded the arrangement of rooms, the unpacking of the carriage, and all the little bustle of an arrival.

People dined early in those days, especially in Auvergne; and some change of dress and other preparations had scarcely been made by the viscount and his companions when they were summoned to the dining-room. Monsieur and Madame d'Artonne were alone, their daughter being still in her chamber; and it would seem that the slight illness which had befallen her, and the fear which occasioned it, weighed upon her father more than he liked to show; for, though he affected gaiety, and displayed every sign of being rejoiced at his old friend's visit, he fell more than once into a deep fit of

thought, and his brow grew gloomy and sad. When dinner was over and the dessert on the table, Madame d'Artonne rallied her husband upon his gravity. "You are anxious about Julie," she said. "There never was so apprehensive a father, Monsieur de St. Medard. I will go and see how she is, to satisfy you, Alphonse."

"Nay, I will go myself," replied her husband, rising from table. "I will be back in a moment."

But he was gone nearly half-an-hour. When he returned his face bore a look of relief, and he said, "She is better, she is much better; but she is not inclined to say what it was that frightened her, and I do not wish her to be questioned farther on the subject."

"Oh, very well," replied the countess; "I suppose it is, as Monsieur Arnoux suggests, some girlish fright, that she is now ashamed of."

"Perhaps so," replied the count; and the conversation dropped.

After sitting for a short time, the whole party moved out into the grounds that surrounded the Chateau d'Artonne, and which some skilful artist of the line-and-rule school had laboured zealously about forty years before to deprive of everything like picturesque beauty. The fine old woods were cut into stars and crescents, affording, it is true, some beautiful views every now and then of the surrounding scenery, with shady walks and pleasant places of repose innumerable, but still quite unsuited to the character of the country around, and to the chateau itself, which had been probably built in the days of Henry IV. or perhaps before. They were, however, the pink of perfection, according to French taste, at the period of which I speak, and received their climax from what was called a *jardin Anglais*, which was unlike anything that ever was seen in Great Britain between the Land's End and Ultima Thule. What rendered the park certainly very delicious at that period of the year, was the multitude of streams and fountains that it contained, the waters of which were disposed with great taste, affording a pleasant coolness to the air at every turn, with pleasant sights to the eye and murmuring sounds to the ear.

After the party had sauntered through the park for about half-an-hour, the Count d'Artonne was called away by a servant; and Monsieur de St. Medard walked on by the side of the countess, talking over old times. The topic was one which seemed to interest them both deeply; and many a little incident and scene of the past was recalled, which was spoken of with a feeling, one may almost say a tenderness, which had something peculiar in it. They were both grave

and calm—two friends conversing upon things that were gone; but yet it seemed as if sensations that were gone, too, mingled with the stream of thought, and gave it a softer, perhaps a sadder character.

There is no reason why I should keep the reader in any doubt upon this subject. Monsieur de St. Medard had been deeply attached to the Countess d'Artonne before she had become the wife of his friend. What had been her own sentiments towards him he did not know; for he had offered his hand and been refused by her parents, who softened the disappointment, as far as such disappointments can be softened, by telling him that they had long before promised their daughter to the Count d'Artonne. St. Medard had instantly quitted the pursuit; and feeling that his sensations might be more than he could control if he indulged them at all, he had absented himself altogether from the society, not only of the lady whom he loved, but of the friend whose wife she became. Whether D'Artonne was aware of his affection or not, he never knew; and, though it had not been disguised from the countess herself before her marriage, he had too much delicacy of feeling even to refer to it now, though their conversation turned upon the very days when it was at its height. The only glimmering of that tenderness which shone through the shadiness which memory seemed to cast over their conversation, appeared when Madame d'Artonne observed with a sigh, "Those youthful days are indeed happy ones, Monsieur de St. Medard, whatever one may think at the time. But it was very wrong of you not to come to see us long ago."

"Nay," replied the viscount, with a sigh; "nay, dear lady; it was very right."

The moment after, Monsieur d'Artonne rejoined them with a grave air. "Madame de Bausse," he said, speaking to his wife, "has sent to inquire whether Martin is here. His dog, it seems, has returned alone. Some new folly, I suppose."

"He owes one-half of them to his mother," replied Madame d'Artonne, "and is as much to be pitied as blamed. But to dream of our giving him Julie is something too preposterous."

"That could never be," said Monsieur d'Artonne, in a tone so stern and altered that his wife started, and turned to look in his face.

It was calm, though grave; and Madame d'Artonne continued, addressing the viscount, "You recollect Henriette de l'Orne?"

"Oh, quite well," replied Monsieur de St. Medard, "both married and unmarried. And so the fair Henriette, it seems, has lost none of her amiable qualities."

Madame d'Artonne looked down, and smiled with a very meaning look; but the count answered, "So far from it, St. Medard, that she has added to them many others, which were, perhaps, indeed concealed in the girl, but are very apparent in the woman. Capricious, coquettish, vain, weak, and false she always was; but now ——".

"Hush, hush, hush! my dear Alphonse!" exclaimed his wife; "for pity's sake, do spare her a little! Recollect, my friend, she is a woman, and our near relation."

"A bad woman is worse than a bad man," said the count.

"You think so because they are more rare," replied his wife, laughing; and the party returned to the château.

CHAPTER VI.

AN hour or two before nightfall, Julie d'Artonne rejoined the party, which had now assembled in the library of the château, a fine old room with deep windows, lined up to the ceiling with ancient volumes in rich but faded bindings. The declining sun was shining through the tall square casements, with some portion of the glow of evening in his light, and the warm colour that he cast upon her beautiful features and graceful form seemed to add to her loveliness, as, entering the room with a timid yet graceful step, Julie d'Artonne approached the table where her father and mother were seated conversing with the viscount, conscious that she would be an object of attention and interest to all.

The little embarrassment, however, soon passed away; her father spoke calmly and kindly to her, her mother gaily and cheerfully; and Monsieur de St. Medard, mingling a certain degree of courteous gallantry with fatherly tenderness, soon made her feel as much at home with him as if she had known him from her youth. Francis de Langy said nothing to her, for his was that particular age when there is a sort of timid consciousness of stronger affections yet undeveloped, which ties the tongue by the first influence of the passion afterwards so eloquent. He stood in one of the windows, however, and gazed on her, as she entered, not only with admiration but interest. Admiration, indeed, forms but a very small part of love, and the boy was in truth advancing by very easy steps towards that passion. The Abbé Arnoux was standing near him, examining the illuminated title-page of a book which he had taken down; and the eyes of Julie d'Artonne, when, after speaking to her parents and the viscount for a moment or two, they turned in that direction, might be either looking at the instructor or the pupil.

"You should thank our young friend the baron, Julie,"

said Madame d'Artonne; "for it seems that it was he who first found you this morning in the wood, and was your first physician, carrying you to the fountain and sprinkling your face with water: a skilful doctor, truly, for one who has so lately commenced practice."

Julie smiled, and, advancing towards Francis, gave him her hand, expressing in grateful language the thanks her mother told her were his due. Girls of that age are almost always less timid than young men; but Francis de Langy, thus encouraged, would not and did not let the opportunity pass, but, forcing himself to do what he knew was courteous and right, he told her how happy he was to have rendered her any assistance. In the mean while the conversation between the rest of the party had turned to other subjects: the Abbé Arnoux had advanced to speak with the Count d'Artonne; and Julie and Francis remained in the window, talking together for nearly half-an-hour. The ice was broken between them from that moment, and such a cold commodity had never anything to do with their after intercourse through life.

How long their conversation would have continued is not for me to say; for most young people are fond of sweet things, and they found it very pleasant. But it was interrupted at length by the voice of Monsieur d'Artonne, exclaiming, "Come hither, come hither, and hear what we have determined. Monsieur de St. Medard will spend a week with us after his return from seeing all the fair sights of Auvergne ——"

The face of Francis de Langy looked very blank; for, to say the truth, he thought he had already seen the fairest thing that Auvergne could produce, and he loved not to be hurried away from it. But the subsequent words of the count soon cleared his countenance again.

"This is by far the best arrangement," continued Monsieur d'Artonne; "for it will give us an opportunity of sharing his tour, showing him all the wonders of our province, and afterwards of talking them all over under the shade of our own trees."

If one might judge by Julie's face, she was not less satisfied with the arrangement than the rest of the party; and her father, remarking the look of pleasure that his announcement called up, added, with a cheerful smile, "We must all take our part in doing the honours of Auvergne; and to you, Julie, I commit the charge of guide, interpreter, and instructor to your young friend there; so, if he be not able to answer a complete catechism upon the beauties, antiquities, and natural productions of the province, and to speak with the accent of a native our own round harmonious Auvergnat, I shall call you to account for it."

"Give me time, give me time," said Julie, whose spirits, naturally light and cheerful, were beginning to rise again; "give me time, and I will answer for the rest."

"Oh! you shall have time," replied Monsieur de St. Medard; "we do not travel as some people do, hurrying from object to object without affording them a second look or a second thought: we go really to see, really to think, really to observe, in short; and we wish the impressions of to-day to be gathered as not only memories for to-morrow, but as treasures for the time to come."

"We will all early to bed to-night," said the count, "that we may be up with the sun to-morrow morning. Old Pierrot, who rode courier for us, Elise—do you recollect?—some seventeen years ago, shall go on before and prepare horses for us, and rooms, and dinners, and suppers, and all the comforts of this life; for in Auvergne, you know, St. Medard, one cannot travel as one does in other parts of France, trusting to the providence of innkeepers to have everything ready even if a whole army were to arrive."

So went on the conversation for some hours, in the course of which the whole arrangements were made for their journey, and the evening passed pleasantly enough. The count evidently exerted himself to show his friend how sincerely rejoiced he was to see him; and though, from time to time, he fell into a fit of deep thought, yet it was never of long continuance, and he roused himself to be as gay as ever. Twice, indeed, during the course of the evening, one of the servants announced that Madame de Bausse had sent to make inquiries if her son had been heard of at the Château d'Artonne; and the count answered somewhat impatiently, saying, "Pray, tell her he has not been here. You may add, too, that I have had friends with me all day, or I would have ridden down to see her."

"The man who has come up, sir," rejoined the servant to whom he spoke, and who was an old and privileged person in the family—"the man who has come up, sir, says that his lady thinks the young marquis has been murdered; and she has had his valet, who was out all the morning, arrested when he came home."

"Nonsense!" cried the marquis. "I dare say, by their rash acts," he continued, speaking to his wife, "both mother and son have made themselves enemies enough in the country; but by accusing an innocent person of murdering her son, before she knows that he has been murdered at all, she will not effect anything to discover him."

"I doubt not in the least," said the countess, "that the first thing heard of him will be that he is at Paris, overwhelmed with debts and follies. If you remember, Alphonse,

it was so just eighteen months ago ; and nothing would bring him home again till he was sent back by the king, for some cause, I do not well remember what."

"He drew his sword upon one of the gardes-du-corps," replied Monsieur de St. Medard, "on the terrace at Versailles; a very gross misdemeanour indeed. In former days he would have been punished more severely."

"Oh! he will be found in Paris," exclaimed the countess. But her husband said nothing, and Julie sat in silence, with her eyes bent down upon the ground. Francis de Langy had remarked the words which Madame d'Artonne had used, during their morning's walk, in regard to the pretensions of Monsieur de Bausse to the hand of Julie, and he now asked himself, "Is she pained to hear him thus spoken of? Or is she anxious respecting his fate? Can she, though so young, have felt love towards this man? Perhaps it is so;" and he experienced those sensations rising up in his own bosom, which, whatever may be their primary source in the human heart, whether vanity, pride, or any other modification of selfishness, most men of fine minds have experienced towards those they love: a degree of jealousy, not so much of acts as of thoughts and feelings; a jealousy that extends not alone to the present and the future, but to the past. He felt that, if love be the tree of life to the heart, the value of the golden fruit is injured if any touch but one's own brushes away even the first bloom. Young minds, however, dwell not long upon such things; and very soon, the conversation taking another turn, the Marquis de Bausse and all concerning him passed away from the minds of the greater part of the persons there present, and the evening went by cheerfully till they separated to rest.

The Abbé Arnoux sat for about a quarter of an hour in the chamber of his pupil, for he was a very conscientious man, and sought not alone to store the mind of Francis de Langy, but to train it; and every night he conversed with him for a short time over the events of the past day, commenting upon all that had taken place in a mild and pleasant, though grave tone, seeking as much to induce a habit of self-examination in the mind of his young friend as to draw instruction and counsel from the occurrences passed under review. But upon the present occasion the admonitions of the abbé were less successful than usual, though they were as wise as ever, and given more in the manner of quiet conversation than of serious instruction; but the truth was, that Francis de Langy had two worlds now to deal with, the world without and the world within, and of the latter the good abbé could see very little. Like the globe which we inhabit, that world had been called into existence in one day,

and Francis de Langy, the Adam of his own paradise, longed to be alone to examine all that it contained.

When the abbé was gone, a servant presented himself, but he was more easily disposed of; for, after having taken the dressing-gown from his hands, his young master told him he wanted nothing more, and sent him quickly away. Then, casting himself into a large arm-chair, he gave himself up to thought, while his eyes wandered round the wide old chamber, lined with black oak and floored with smooth and glossy tiles.

His feelings were certainly strange; for, as we have said, a new world had opened to him, a world of sensations altogether fresh. It seemed as if that one day had given him more than all the rest of life. It was one of those changes of existence which affect men of eager and energetic character almost always suddenly. Up to that morning, his life had been comparatively merely animal: the intellect had been awake, it is true, to think, to reason, to act; it was the soul that had slept—the soul, whose task is to feel. His existence had been that of the chrysalis; but now one gleam of summer sunshine had burst the cold husk around him, and the light creature of air had put forth her wings, never to sheathe them again on this side of the tomb. Oh, beautiful symbol of the Greeks! how well dost thou represent man's agitated spirit, fluttering, wandering from hour to hour, seeking thy honied food from all the bright things of God, yet frail and delicate as the flowers on which thou retest, wounded by a touch, defaced by a drop of rain, blown hither and thither by a breath of wind, crushed by the first wintry storm! Oh, beautiful symbol of the Greeks! thou art indeed too sadly like the soul!

He sat for an hour trying to disentangle his own thoughts; but finding them still one bewildered maze, and at length impatient with the fruitless effort, he determined he would cast himself down to rest. There, too, he was disappointed: no sleep would visit his eyelids; and, after tossing for half-an-hour, gazing, by the light of the lamp which he had left burning on the table, at some quaint old heads grinning on the sculptured cornice around, he rose, threw on his dressing-gown; and saying, "I will get a book," he quitted his chamber, and descended the short wooden staircase which led to the ground-floor of the house.

He knew the door of the library well; and, crossing the hall towards it, he opened it suddenly and went in, expecting to find it dark and untenanted. To his astonishment, however, he perceived the Count d'Artonne walking up and down the room, with his hands tightly clasped together and his eyes fixed upon the ground. It was but for an instant

that he beheld him in this attitude; for the opening of the door made the count look up immediately, and a glance of anger crossed his countenance. When he saw who it was, however, the expression of irritation passed away; and, as Francis de Langy was withdrawing, he called to him to come in.

"What! my young friend," he said, "are you a passer of sleepless nights? I thought that the hours of youth had a hallowed charm against watchful care; and that it was manhood alone, with its anxieties, and disappointments, and satieties, and sterile aspirations, that was bound to keep the weary eye wide open, or to close it in vain during the long vigils of the night."

He spoke almost bitterly; but Francis de Langy had neither right nor inclination to inquire farther into the misanthropical tone of his host, and he merely replied, "I know not how it is, but I have not been able to fall asleep. I have seen so many things to-day that I cannot get them out of my head, and so, after trying for some time, I came down to seek for a book to amuse myself."

"And an excellent way, too," answered the count: "I never thought of it. But what book will you choose? Here are plenty of every kind. Here is Corneille; will you take him?"

"No," replied De Langy; "that is not a book to go to sleep upon."

"Voltaire?" said the count. "He is a great favourite of your uncle's."

"Nay," answered the young man; "I did not know that. I have read much of his poetry, but not much of his philosophy; I did not like it."

"Ha!" exclaimed the count; "how so?"

"Why, it seemed to me," said Francis de Langy, "though I am not very competent to form an opinion, that he was always trying to put the universe in a spoon: I mean, that he appeared to think his own mind could comprehend everything, and that, from the little he could see upon this earth, he could judge of the boundless power and wisdom that created it."

"Ha!" cried the count, thoughtfully; "ha! Your uncle surely does not teach you such things?"

"Oh, no," replied the youth: "he leaves me to follow what course of reading I think best, and indeed I never heard him speak upon the subject."

"And the Abbé Arnoux?" said Monsieur d'Artonne.

"Does he prohibit Voltaire?"

"Oh, no," replied Francis de Langy. "The only thing I recollect he ever said upon the subject was, that people

should beware, in reading him, lest they should take a jest for a reason, and receive a doubt where they can get at a certainty."

"He was right," answered the count, "he was right; and yet what is there certain in this world?"

Francis de Langy looked down for a moment, and then said in an inquiring tone, "I thought many things were certain; the first principles of all things, such as that there can be no effect without a cause."

"You have dabbled in metaphysics," replied the count, smiling. "But, as every cause must be an effect also, we only remove the difficulty by tracing one cause to another."

"I do not well know what difficulty you mean," rejoined Francis de Langy; "but, as each cause may have many effects, we might, perhaps, by tracing back numerous effects to fewer causes, resolve the whole into one cause, which, being the cause of everything, would also be the cause of itself, or in other words be self-existent—the first attribute of God."

The count paused, and looked down upon the ground for at least a minute without reply; and then, turning to one of the book-shelves, he said, "Well, if you will not have Voltaire, here is good Montaigne, the book of all others for a sleepless night. His quiet, mild simplicity makes me always feel, when I open his pages, as if I were sitting over the fire on a wintry night with an old friend. He tells all his feelings with so much frankness that one can scarcely refrain from telling him one's own in return. Take him then, my young friend: if you have never read him, you will be delighted; if you have read him before, read him again—you will be sure to find something new in every line."

Francis de Langy took the book, and, thanking the count, was turning away, when Monsieur d'Artonne added, "This good Abbé Arnoux, he seems a very sensible man, I think."

"He is indeed," replied Francis de Langy, warmly; and then continued, with a feeling of diffidence in his own opinion, "as far as I can judge, he is a most sensible man; and my uncle, as well as many others, have often told me that they never met a man of better judgment."

"And no bigot?" asked the count.

"Oh! anything but that," replied Francis de Langy. "I have often heard him declare that scepticism itself is scarcely more opposed to true religion than bigotry, and does it less harm."

"He is right, he is right," said the count. "I must have some conversation with him. He does believe in a God, then?"

Francis de Langy started, and gazed for a moment in the

count's face with infinite surprise. "As he does in his own existence," he replied at length.

"Ah! my young friend," cried the count, shaking his head, "there are many an abbé and many a priest in France who believe in no God, no soul, no futurity."

The young man laughed. "Then they must be rogues as well as fools," he said; "which does no great honour to their creed. I have heard of such things as atheists, it is true; but I should think there was room in the mad-houses of France to hold them."

The count gazed at him for a moment with a very meaning smile; and then, holding out his hand to him, he said, "Good night! I, at least, shall now go to my bed, and perhaps may sleep the better from having seen you; try you the same plan, and lay old Montaigne down by your bedside. The best of such friends is, that they are nowise impatient. He will wait till you are ready to hear him, without pressing for an audience." Thus saying, he led the way out of the library, and each retired to his own chamber.

CHAPTER VII.

At a very early hour on the following morning the party from the Château d'Artonne, accompanied by a number of servants, and carrying with them such provisions and luxuries as might be supposed necessary in a very savage country, but in no other, set out for the baths of the Mont d'Or. Their first halting-place was at Clermont, where they stopped to dine; but, as they intended to revisit that town on their way back, they paused only for the meal, and then proceeded on their way in two vehicles—the large, old-fashioned travelling carriage of Monsieur de St. Medard, with its straight sides, but comfortable interior, and a *chaise-de-poste* belonging to the Count d'Artonne, much in the shape and form of a large, roomy cabriolet. The count had arranged the party according to his taste, declaring that they would take it in turns, two and two, to journey in the *chaise-de-poste*; and during their first day's expedition, the countess, the viscount, Francis de Langy, and Julie d'Artonne, occupied the travelling coach, while the count himself, perhaps in consequence of his conversation over-night with his young guests, took his place in the *chaise-de-poste* with the Abbé Arnoux.

Hard must be the heart and stiff the exterior, cold the feelings or very rigid the education of those persons who can travel together along rough roads and through picturesque scenery without casting away from them the husk of reserve, and becoming familiar—nay, intimate—with their fellow-tra-

vellers. Long years of acquaintance, indeed, make us less friendly with other beings like ourselves than some forty or fifty miles over stony causeways and amidst bad inns. All the little inconveniences that one has to suffer, all the little acts of kindness, attention, and assistance that one has to show, remove everything like distance and stiffness, and create those minor interests, those small gratitudes, those pleasant courtesies, which soften wonderfully the way for regard and intimacy. If Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne, when they began their journey that morning, recollected at all that they were a young lady and gentleman approaching that age when early freedom is to be abandoned for the sober proprieties of society, they had both forgotten, before they reached Clermont, that they were anything but boy and girl; and when they set out again, after a hasty and unceremonious dinner, were well-nigh calling each other Julie and Francis.

If ever the reader have travelled from Clermont-Ferrand to the baths of the Mont d'Or, he will know that the road, though perhaps not the finest in all Auvergne, is nevertheless full of rich and picturesque loveliness; and every one who has passed through or reached the age of love and tenderness will know what an effect is produced upon the minds of two young persons of different sexes by the rich, grand, beautiful objects of nature; what new sensations, what fresh and happy sympathies, are awakened by the sight of splendid scenery with persons of tastes, habits, and feelings like ourselves. The worst of it is, too, that sympathies, when once set vibrating, extend their influence to all sorts of neighbouring sensations, as the shaking of an earthquake runs along the basaltic strata for an immeasurable distance round the spot where the volcanic shock was given. Oh! it is wonderful how many doors, leading to the most secret chambers of the heart, will be cast open, like that of the Arabian robber, at the sound of one or two magical words!

Such was the case with Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne, though they themselves knew nothing of what was going on within them. The reader may look surprised, and exclaim, "What! are you going to make a boy and girl of sixteen or seventeen fall in love with each other?—actually in love?"

Dear reader, it is past your power or mine to prevent it.—They did!

The day was beautiful: there was no fog, as on the preceding morning; but a light white cloud every now and then swept over the sun, and cast a slow-floating shadow over the mountains and the valleys. Every half-league of the road made a change in the scenery—some new *puuy*, or

tall volcanic mountain, starting up at each turn, and as the road wound round its base, presenting strange and varied forms, such as no other country in the world can produce. Sometimes it was a green and velvet slope, stretching up to the foot of the Alpine giant that rose tall and blue behind; sometimes it was a black mass of lava and cinders poured down to the very verge of the road. Here and there appeared a wood fringing the mountain's base, and then again a rocky precipice with a thousand streams trickling over its broad face, or a long dim valley with a white cataract rushing down in foam in the distance.

At every two or three hundred yards Julie had still to cry, "Look there!—look there! Is not that beautiful? That is the Puy de Laschamps! That is the village of Salien! Now we are passing the pretty little Sioule, which rises up that valley. Now we shall have to ascend for some way, and then down to Rochefort."

"Let us get out and mount on foot," said Francis de Langy. "I should like to make every journey through a beautiful country on foot or on horseback, and only get into a carriage when there is nothing to be seen."

Julie was very ready to agree to his proposal; but Madame d'Artonne declined the fatigue, and remained in the carriage with Monsieur de St. Medard. The *chaise-de-poste*, however, which led the way, stopped also, and the count and the abbé descended to walk up the hill; but Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne, with their light young limbs, far outstripped the other two, although they stopped every now and then to gaze at the scenery around.

Onward they went, talking cheerfully and lightly of a thousand things, and suffering each subject that presented itself to carry them away into its manifold collateral branches, so that heaven only knows where their young thoughts wandered before they reached the top of the hill. At all events, when the rest of the party came up, they were both in deep meditation; and both had to rouse themselves, to re-enter the carriage and proceed on the way. The journey was a somewhat long one for the roads and customs of that day; and, consequently, at Rochefort they stopped to examine the curious little town, built, as it were, in the cleft of a rock, and the hill with its old château, now I believe destroyed, and the basaltic columns in one of the two neighbouring valleys.

Each party had its comment, and its enjoyment of the scenes they witnessed, according to age and circumstances: The elder four looked back to the feudal times when Auvergne had lords of its own, and to the strange changes in the state of all things which had taken place within the last century.

"How much greater a difference," said the Count d'Artonne, "has been made by the passing of the last hundred years than by that of any two or three ages before!"

"It has been effected," replied Monsieur de St. Medard, "by the reign of Louis the Fourteenth."

"And by the government of the Regent Duke of Orleans," added the Abbé Arnoux. "Luxuries and vices effect greater changes in society than even the lightning of war, or the earthquake of political convulsion."

"As the chemists show us," rejoined Monsieur de St. Medard, "that a few drops of acid will corrode and dissolve the steel which the hardest blow could not penetrate."

"Anatomists, too, tell us," observed the abbé, "that, when soft things and hard are placed together, it is the soft that always mould the hard to their own shape. Thus, bones have been affected by the pressure of the muscles."

"Ay," said the Count d'Artonne; "and here in Auvergne we see that the waters have everywhere channelled the solid rock to suit their own convenience, making themselves valleys for their course, as we make ourselves roads to travel on."

What was the conversation of Julie and Francis de Langy? It was of the beauty of the scenery, the loveliness of the day, the clearness of the stream that sparkled by, the happiness of dwelling amongst such sights of loveliness, where Francis said truly that he could remain for ever. There mingled, however, with the rest, many a wild flight of fancy, many an image and many a thought which poets might have been proud of, springing from the best fountain of poetry that the world possesses—deep feeling; a fountain which is only, perhaps, found very bright and pure before the dust and ashes of earth have fallen upon it and troubled the waters thereof.

So well were they contented with the little town of Rochefort and its wild scenery, that they almost regretted when the time came to journey on to the Mont d'Or; but, as they had some way still before them through a mountainous country, they could not linger long; and, entering the carriages again as the shadows were growing long, they set out, and reached the inn at that famous watering-place just as night was falling.

The two young travellers saw the deep shadows gathering on the hills with regret; but the rest of the party were well pleased to close the pleasant labours of the day in a place which the care of the good old courier, Pierrot, had made as comfortable for them as possible. Everything had been prepared for the most cheerful meal of the day, and about half-an-hour after their arrival they were all seated round a well-

covered table; but, strange to say, all were more grave and thoughtful than during the journey. Once or twice, indeed, as they had driven along, Julie had fallen into a deep reverie; but the ever-changing objects had called her quickly from herself till the day's enjoyments and excitement were over. Then she grew sad again, and Francis de Langy also was more pensive. The conversation took a serious turn; and, as he had been encouraged by his uncle to do on all occasions, he mingled with it, though modestly.

Julie listened to him with attention and with surprise, as perhaps the reader might, if we were to pause in order to relate all that he said. It would, indeed, be almost worth while to do so, had we space; for the mixture of youthfulness, almost boyishness, which he showed in all matters where feeling and imagination were concerned, with the deep thought and clear reasoning which had been gained by an education amongst men, was not a little curious in itself; and it might suggest the question, whether in general with young people we do not make a mistake, and whether it be not necessary to instruct the heart and the mind at the same time, and keep the one in its knowledge upon a par with the other. But we have much before us, and we must go on, closing this chapter here, as the next records an adventure which ought to have an apartment to itself.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEVERAL days had passed, and seldom had Time, whose wings, in moments of happiness, are always those of the swallow, darted on more rapidly than he had done with Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne. Julie, for her part, seemed now to have forgotten whatever was the cause of those passing clouds which, as we have shown, hung upon her when first she was brought before the eyes of the reader. The light-heartedness of character natural to her age and disposition had all returned, everything like the reserve produced by newness of acquaintance had passed away, and she and her young companion were as old friends as if they had known each other twenty years. It may be asked if Monsieur and Madame d'Artonne saw all that was going on, and if they approved of it; if Monsieur de St. Medard marked the boyish fondness of his adopted son for the beautiful girl with whom he now passed his whole time. The answer is very simple: they all saw it; they all approved of it; they all desired the union of Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne. It was to some far future day they looked, it is true; but still it was a pleasant scheme, which had struck them all the

moment they had seen those two bright young beings standing side by side in the window of the château. Madame d'Artonne had whispered it to her husband; the count had laughed, and told it to St. Medard; and the viscount had grasped his friend's hand, and replied warmly, "With all my heart!"

Never did the flower of love, which, frail and delicate as it looks, will grow up amidst storm and tempest, and bud and blossom, how fairly and how often! amidst wintry desolation—never did the flower of love first rise under a warmer or more genial sunshine, with a promise of a brighter and a fairer summer. But it may be often remarked, that, when it comes forth under such favourable circumstances, when an unseasonable warmth nurses it from the ground, and everything promises it a fair and happy season, the flower seldom lives to cast its petals and to change to fruit. Either sickly and delicate in itself, it fades speedily, or else it withers in the fire of the sunshine in which it was born, or else some summer-day tempest comes upon it with thunder and with hail, and beats the broken blossom to the earth from which it rose. Seldom, very seldom, does it live long; but, if it does, it affords to us human beings one of the few bright proofs that we have of such a thing as happiness being possible upon earth.

All then smiled upon the kindling affection of Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne; they were all delighted to see that an alliance which they so greatly wished would have in it an ingredient so seldom found in the marriages of France—love. Monsieur de St. Medard had known that passion, and had been disappointed; he therefore longed to secure the child of his adoption against that bitterness in the cup of life which he himself had tasted. Monsieur and Madame d'Artonne had also felt love—love for each other; and, knowing the greatness of the blessing, they eagerly sought it for their child. Thus they gladly saw, as I have said, the future union of Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne founded upon the basis of early attachment, and they had so far yielded to the custom of their country as to determine on it without consulting them.

The love of boys and girls is an object on which grey-bearded men vent much spleen and scorn; but depend upon it, reader, where it exists in reality, it is the sweetest thing that ever life knows; it is the violet of our short year of existence. The rose is beautiful, richer in hues, full of perfume and brightness, as she flaunts her gay bosom in the ardent sun of June; but give me the violet, the dear early violet, that scents with her odorous breath the air of unconfirmed spring; the soft, the timid violet, retreating from the

gaze with her blue eye cast down; the first sweet child of the sweetest season; the tenderest, the gentlest of all the flowers of the field, the emblem of earnest and innocent affection.

No, there is nothing like it! In all after years we may lay our hand upon what joy we will—pure and innocent it must be, to bear the comparison for a moment—but I say, we may lay our hand upon what joy we will in after existence, we shall never find anything on the earth like the first flower of the heart.

Thus it went on, then, with every encouragement that it could receive from all who beheld the growing love of the two young people who have been placed before the eyes of the reader. The encouragement was not open, indeed; that is to say, there were no words spoken, no hints given of that which was in contemplation between the two families; but every facility for being together was afforded, and every opportunity for enjoying in the society of each other those calm but high-toned pleasures which might so entwine their mutual love with bright and everlasting memories as to add to the mortal passion those feelings which seem born for immortality.

Madame d'Artonne was not a prudent woman: she was something far better—a good one. She was one of those who preserve in their hearts, notwithstanding some intercourse with the world, the brightest of the three jewels which form the crown of Charity—the thinking no evil; and, as the greater part of her life had been passed at a distance from the court of France, the shackles which that court and its habits imposed, even upon the education of a daughter, had not taken hold of her mind. Thus Julie, as we have at first shown her, had never, in the midst of her wild native mountains, been subjected to the constant superintendence of the *gouvernante* or the *bonne*, but had roamed about at large, guarded by principles which had been carefully instilled into her young heart, and trusted by her parents entirely to the supervision of the best of all guides and rules—conscience. The same course was pursued still; and neither her father nor her mother thought it at all more necessary that they should have a watchful eye upon her because Francis de Langy was her companion.

The short visit of the party to the baths of the Mont d'Or had been completed; everything in that neighbourhood which could be seen had been examined; and sweeping round, with various excursions to different points, from the eastern to the western side of the hills, and making a considerable part of the journey on horseback, they had reached the little town of Pontgibaud, on the road from Aubusson to

Clermont, not without some fatigue to the elder part of the family.

"Well, Monsieur Arnoux," said the count, as they sat discussing their plans for the following day, "business will take me to Pontaumur, and Monsieur de St. Medard accompanies me in the *chaise-de-poste*; so we must have you either to stay and entertain Madame d'Artonne, who is too tired for any fresh expeditions, or to find something curious to show these two young people, and accompany them to see it."

"That will be easily done," replied the abbé, "for one of the most remarkable objects in Auvergne lies in this neighbourhood. Francis must visit it, but I do not know whether Mademoiselle d'Artonne may not find it too fatiguing."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Julie eagerly; "I will not be left out of the party."

"We shall have to ride a considerable part of the way," said the abbé, "and the rest of the journey must be performed on foot, unless indeed they have improved the paths since I was here before. You will have a walk of two good hours, Mademoiselle d'Artonne."

"Oh! Julie is the best walker in the province," replied the countess.

"Besides, Monsieur Arnoux," cried Julie laughingly, alluding to some mistakes which Monsieur Arnoux had made at the Mont d'Or, "what would you do for an interpreter if I were not with you? You would never get back to Pontgibaud: whenever any of our good Auvergnats told you to go to the right, you would think he meant to the left. No, no: you must have your interpreter."

So was it settled. Three of the small horses of Auvergne were hired at Pontgibaud on the following morning; and at an early hour the abbé, accompanied by his pupil and Julie d'Artonne, set out in the direction of the little village, or rather hamlet, of Chalucet; for, when I saw it, some half-dozen houses of an extremely poor character were all that it contained; and probably it was not a place of much more importance at the time of this tale, though I remember having seen some old walls, half fallen down, which indicated that there had been more and probably better houses in the place in times long past.

However that may be, beyond Chalucet the horses could not go; and leaving them in the care of one of the peasants, whose jargon was perfectly incomprehensible both to the abbé and Francis de Langy, the former asked, through the interpretation of Julie d'Artonne, whether they could not have a guide to accompany them. The old man, for such he was, replied that every one was out tending the herds in

the fields. "If you go down to the valley," he said, "and you cannot miss your way down that path, you will find a man fishing in the stream. He can show you about, I dare say; for, though he's a stranger here, he seems to know the country well enough."

"I am afraid," said Julie, laughing, after she had translated this reply; "I am afraid that this is your only chance, for our good people of Auvergne are not fond of quitting their flocks."

"Oh! I can find the way myself," said the abbé; "it was only for greater security, so let us go;" and down the steep path they accordingly proceeded, winding in and out through some of the most curious scenery that they had yet seen. Rocks of black lava swept round on every side, and large detached blocks here and there seemed resolved to obstruct the forward progress of the path, which, nevertheless, like the perseverance of a quiet but firm spirit amongst the difficulties and obstacles of the world, pursued its way onward unceasingly, turning round those obstructions which it could not surmount.

"Hark, Francis!" said Julie, stopping, and laying her beautiful hand upon his arm, after they had gone some way laughing and talking; "hark, Monsieur Arnoux! do you not hear a loud sound? It surely cannot be thunder. If so, we had better seek shelter immediately, for our storms in these mountains are not like those of any other place. Many people and cattle are destroyed by them every year."

"Oh, no; it cannot be thunder!" exclaimed Francis de Langy; "there is nothing but a light cloud here and there, and besides it goes on."

The abbé had listened to what they said with a smile. "It is a singular sound," he replied at length, "and one I never heard anywhere but here. Is it not like the roaring of a volcano?"

"Oh! I know what it is," cried Julie: "it is the noise of a cascade."

"No," answered the abbé; "it is simply the murmuring of the river Sioule, which, flowing over a bed of lava, and winding in and out amongst a thousand rocks of the same resonant material, seems as if it were imitating, for us of modern days, the voice, which it must have often heard, of the fierce volcano at the foot of which it runs. The sound rises, however," he added, "and seems to gather its greatest strength about this point, for it becomes much fainter when you reach the bank of the river below."

As he spoke, he led the way on, and in a few minutes they reached the valley of the Sioule, which presented to their eyes one of the most extraordinary, wild, and interesting

scenes that it is possible to find on earth. On one side of the valley rose a stupendous mountain of granite, round the base of which flowed a beautifully clear stream, scarcely more, at the time I speak of—which it must be remembered was in the middle of summer—than a foot in depth at any place, and in general not above five or six inches. But few trees, and those scattered at great distances upon small patches of vegetable mould, stood out from the cold grey mountain, serving in their insignificance to afford some measure of its tremendous height.

On the other side of the valley appeared, however, the object for which the abbé had brought them thither. This was one of those enormous masses of lava which characterise Auvergne: a mountain in itself, completely hiding from the eyes below the still higher mountain behind it. On its strange wild face were seen several deep caverns, blacker than its own blackness; at least so they appeared as the sun then fell; and from them, distinct and clear, as if actually pouring forth in molten fury, were several tremendous streams of lava, now hardened into rock, but marked out from each other by wide irregular slopes of the fern and heath which carpeted the mountain. Two of these streams especially caught the eye of the travellers, sweeping round upon the right and left, like the ruined walls of some vast amphitheatre, and apparently bounding the irruptions that had taken place, for all the lesser torrents of lava seemed embraced within those two gigantic arms.

As if to form the strongest contrast possible with the magnificent wildness of the mountain scene above, the banks of the stream on either side were covered with exquisite soft turf of a vivid green; while the clear waters between those velvet banks sparkled with the brightness of a diamond over the fragments of dark stone that formed its bed. Julie and Francis de Langy gazed with astonishment, wonder, and awe; and although the abbé had seen this extraordinary spectacle before, he could not behold it even a second time without being strongly and strangely moved by a sight which has, perhaps, no parallel in nature.

But one object in the whole prospect diminished the effect upon the mind, which was the figure of another human being. It was a scene which required perfect solitude to bring out all its beauties, and that one object undoubtedly detracted greatly from the general effect. Neither was his occupation one of those the nature of which at all harmonised with the objects round. He was casting the dull line into the clear water; and certainly, whatever charm beautiful scenery may give to the sport of fishing, the sport itself adds nothing to the poetical beauty of the scenery. A shepherd,

a goatherd, any of the objects of pastoral life, might not have jarred so harshly on the sight; but when the abbé, after gazing round for some five minutes in perfect silence, at length said in a low tone, "There is our guide, I suppose," Julie could not refrain from exclaiming, "I wish he were away; he spoils the landscape sadly."

"He does indeed," replied Francis de Langy; "neither is his costume particularly picturesque. The plain brown cloth of Auvergne would suit such a scene as this better than that smart-looking Parisian frock."

"We must speak with him at all events," rejoined the abbé; "for although, as I said before, I believe I could find the way about the place myself, yet it may save you fatigue, fair lady, to have the shortest road pointed out to us."

Thus speaking, he advanced towards the stranger; but ere they had taken half-a-dozen steps, Julie exclaimed, "Why, that is strange; 'tis surely Jean, one of the servants of Madame de Bausse."

Intent upon his fishing, and his ear filled with the murmur of the stream, the man had not remarked their approach. When he did so, however, a sudden look of surprise passed over his countenance, perhaps not altogether unmingled with alarm. If there was any such feeling, it passed away in an instant; and, pulling off his hat as he recognised Mademoiselle d'Artonne, he said, "Ah! Mademoiselle Julie, is that you? Who would have thought to see you here?"

"Or you either, Jean Marais," she answered. "How is it that Madame de Bausse has parted with you?"

The man paused for a single instant ere he replied, but he then said easily, "Why, mademoiselle, the young marquis being away, you know she had no great use for me; so I took a day's holiday to bring these sleek gentlemen out of the Sioule;" and he pointed to some fine trout which lay upon the bank.

Julie made no answer, but cast her beautiful eyes down to the ground, and remained in thought for a moment or two, at the end of which period Francis de Langy perceived that her cheek turned very pale. A painful feeling that he could not define to himself came again over his heart; and the abbé being at that moment in conversation with the servant in regard to his capability of guiding them over the mountain, the youth resolved he would satisfy himself at once, and put a question which no age after seventeen would have ventured to utter.

"You seem greatly interested in this Marquis de Bausse, Mademoiselle d'Artonne," he said. "I suppose you are much attached to your cousin."

Julie started, and replied, with the same youthful frank-

ness which had characterised his question, "Oh, no! I dislike him very much;" and the colour mounted in her cheek again. "I was only thinking," she said, "that all this is very strange;" and again she fell into thought.

In the mean time the abbé had asked the fisherman to quit his occupation for the moment, and guide them over the hill; but the valet laughed, saying, "I don't know ten steps from the banks of the stream, so that it would be the blind leading the blind, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"You must be better acquainted with the country than we are," rejoined the abbé; "for I am the only one of the party who has ever visited it, and that was twenty years ago."

The man, however, seemed unwilling to give up his sport; and the travellers, after wandering for some way along the course of the valley, turned to take another view of the precipitous steep, from whose caverns, unnumbered centuries ago, poured forth the torrents of fire which have left such extraordinary vestiges behind them. What was the surprise of Julie and Francis de Langy to behold, from the point at which they were now placed, the scene entirely changed! For an instant they could scarcely help believing that the dead volcano had suddenly rekindled into angry life; for several of the caverns in the mountain, while some still remained sombre and dark, had assumed a fiery glare, as if flames and torrents of lava were about to burst forth.

The abbé saw and enjoyed their surprise. "It is from this side only," he said, "that you really see the caverns; before they were cast into deep shadow, and the red ochreous colour, which has been produced by combustion, was concealed till we got into this position."

Julie gazed almost awe-struck. "It is beautiful," she said, "but very fearful. What a sight it must have been to behold such furnaces in activity!"

"It looks like the mouth of the infernal regions," said Francis de Langy.

"And doubtless," replied the abbé, "from such scene as this the poet took his picture of the entrance to Pluto's kingdom. It is indeed sublime. But what think you, Mademoiselle d'Artonne? You are a good climber; will you venture up to the caves themselves? It is a difficult and not a very safe ascent, if I recollect rightly."

Julie laughed. "Oh! where you and Francis go, Monsieur Arnoux," she answered, "I shall find no difficulty. Mine are mountain feet, a great deal more accustomed to tread the rocks and lava of Auvergne than the terraces and streets of Versailles and Paris. I should not wonder if I had to help you both; but whatever we do must be done quickly, for I am afraid there will be a storm before night."

"Oh, no," said the abbé, looking up to the sky; "I do not think so; and I am a meteorologist, you know," he added, with a grave smile at his own pretensions.

"But I am an Auvergnate," answered Julie, laughing "and we all learn these things in our country, Monsieur Arnoux. We have plenty of practice in marking the changes of weather, I can assure you; for we often see three completely different climates in one day, and very seldom have the same for three days together. However, if a storm did come on, we could find plenty of places of shelter here, for Nature has provided us with houses in the rock."

"As she almost always does," said the abbé, "wherever there is an evil or a danger affording a remedy or an escape; even as God," he added, always willing to inculcate a lesson—"even as God never suffers us to be tempted without affording us a warning and offering us a resource. But come, my dear children; the easier way, if I recollect, lies round that large stream of lava: there is a little path runs through the heath, which carries us easily half up the ascent."

The road was readily found, and the greater part of it presented no serious obstacles. In the end there was, indeed, some difficult climbing to be accomplished; but, as Julie had foreseen, her mountain habits rendered the ascent more easy to herself than to either of her companions. Francis de Langy, it is true, full of youth, vigour, and activity, surmounted all the impediments in the way without much trouble: the only difficulty, indeed, that he met with proceeded from his employing more strength than was needful, and by a bolder spring or heavier tread displacing here or there a mass of the lava, which went rolling down into the valley below. The good abbé, however, found that twenty years had made a great difference in his agility, as most men do who try; but, proceeding slowly and cautiously, he went on without danger, refusing all aid from his younger companions.

Often, indeed, was he obliged to stop for a moment, but yet the good man would look up well pleased to the rock above him, where they stood waiting his coming; while Julie's eyes sparkled with pleasure and excitement, and her fair cheek glowed with exercise; her small, full lips panting all the while with the pure breath of the mountain wind. Even age, the sad diluter of all admirations, could not prevent the abbé from saying in his own heart, "Well, for a being of this earth, she is certainly very lovely."

Monsieur Arnoux, however, was not the only one who admired; and Francis de Langy, as he stood beside her, or made an excuse to render her aid where she needed it not,

gazed with still deeper and more glowing feelings upon his lovely companion, and, plunging into the whirlpool of thoughts which their situation suggested, soon lost himself amidst a thousand bright but vague sensations.

Thus going on, they at length reached the mouth of one of the first caverns, and there paused for some short time to rest themselves, studying curiously, as they sat upon a block of lava which had taken the form of a natural bench, the innumerable curious lichens and mosses which had gathered in the shadier parts of the rock. The next they came to was all bare; and the entrance, which was exposed to the heat of the sun, was so scorched, that the lava, which has a peculiar property of absorbing and retaining heat, actually burned the hand that rested upon it. The air in the inside of the cave, too, was suffocating and oppressive; and Julie, when she felt it, again shook her head, saying, "We shall have a storm, Monsieur Arnoux."

Nevertheless, forward they went upon their way, examining all the curious objects that surrounded them, comparing them with other creations of nature or productions of art, and in the sportive revelry of unrestrained imagination deriving a thousand beautiful figures, a thousand wild speculations, a thousand bright conceptions, from the world of wonders through which they passed. Circling round the front of the great volcanic mass, they at length reached the very summit, and then saw that it was but as the first step to another giant mountain behind, apparently of granite. But a different object instantly attracted their attention: an immense heavy cloud rolling from the base of that other mountain towards them, and seeming to sweep the little plain on which they now stood.

"We shall have a fog, I think," said the abbé.

"No, no," replied Julie, with a look of apprehension; "there is a storm coming; a storm of hail, I think. Let us get down to one of the caves as fast as possible; we might be beaten to death by the hailstones."

There was no time for delay; for, almost as Julie spoke, a bright flash of lightning blazed over the face of the dark grey mass; and, running down as fast as possible, the whole party made their way, not without danger, towards the last cave which they had quitted. To say the truth, it was not that which seemed likely to afford the best shelter, being formed principally by a mountain of scoræ, cinders, and earth, which appeared to have been driven back by an advancing stream of lava, with which it was partly mingled, and from which it was partly detached. They had no choice, however; for before they reached it the hail began to fall with a degree of violence of which neither of the two

men had any previous conception. Unprepared for what was coming, Francis de Langy, though young, strong, and active, staggered with the blows; but, almost at the same moment, Julie put her hand to her head and fell. Tenfold strength seemed to be given to him in a moment; and, catching her up in his arms, he bore her into the cavern, which, though not twenty steps distant, she might hardly otherwise have reached alive.

"Julie! dear Julie!" he cried, as he placed her in safety.

"I am not hurt," she exclaimed; "I am not much hurt. —But the abbé? Poor Monsieur Arnoux?"

Francis de Langy darted out of the cavern, and rushed towards the spot where the good ecclesiastic, with his face and hands bleeding, was crouching under the rock, which only in part sheltered him. Half-carrying, half-dragging him along, his pupil at length got him into the cave, though not till both were terribly bruised.

"Oh, Monsieur Arnoux!" cried Julie; "you are sadly hurt, I fear."

"No, no, my child," replied the old man. "It is but a little blood; one of these dreadful hailstones has cut my lip and my cheek. But you? you fell too, my child; and poor Francis has suffered more than either."

Julie gazed at her young companion with an anxious and inquiring look; but he replied, with a laugh, "Oh, no, no! I am not hurt. It is nothing. If you two are safe, I trust to have many a worse beating than this before I die. Let me wipe the blood from your face, Monsieur Arnoux. Julie, are you sure you are not hurt?"

"Oh, no!" she cried; "no: the hail made me stagger, and I stumbled over some stone, I fancy; but I am not hurt, only a little bruised."

As she spoke, she clasped her hands over her eyes, for just then came another awful flash of lightning, which seemed to fill the whole valley with fire.

"Good heaven! what hailstones!" exclaimed Francis de Langy. "They are absolutely masses of ice. That poor fellow in the valley will be killed!"

"I trust not," replied Julie; "he knows Auvergne well, and would never go far on such a day as this without having marked out some place of shelter. I am afraid you are much hurt, Monsieur Arnoux," she continued, as she saw the good abbé bending down his head upon his hands.

"No, my dear young lady," answered the abbé, after a moment's pause; "I was thanking God that I am not much hurt.—Turn your eyes from the lightning, my son: it might blind you."

"Come away, Francis; come away!" exclaimed Julie

d'Artonne, laying her hand upon the arm of her young companion, who was gazing out from the mouth of the cavern upon the strange but magnificent sight afforded by the valley at their feet; "do not stand rashly there in the full glare."

There were few dangers to which Francis de Langy would not willingly have exposed himself to hear such words as those; and, drawing back with Julie into the farther part of the cave, they seated themselves on a pile of volcanic fragments near good Monsieur Arnoux. The storm every moment grew more and more terrible; the flashes of the lightning were incessant, and of a fearful vividness, glancing round and round the cave, and exposing to the eye all the grim features of those innermost recesses which the light of day never revealed. Julie d'Artonne drew closer and closer to her lover's side; and, as fear ever makes one of us weak beings cling to another, breaking down all the barriers which custom places between man and man, she put her arm through his, and in trembling apprehension hid her eyes upon his shoulder, while he soothed her with all those tender caresses which nothing but the terrors of the moment would have emboldened him to offer. He supported her with his arm; he kept her hand clasped in his; and, though he could not but feel that it was a dreadful hour, the termination of which to all of them no one could tell, he tried to persuade his dear Julie, as he called her, that there was no danger, and that the storm would soon pass away.

"One could fancy it the end of the world," said the Abbé Arnoux; and so indeed one might have done, for the rocks and mountains of sonorous basalt, which had multiplied the low murmurs of the Sioule till they had sounded like thunder, now echoed the voice of the thunder itself from rock to rock and cavern to cavern, till the very mountain seemed to shake, and one could feel the vibration of the air upon the cheek as well as on the ear. The falling of the hail added to the roar, and the gush of accumulating waters mingled therewith, so that never, probably, did the ear of man, except in some of those vast convulsions which, with intervals of unnumbered ages, change the face of the whole globe, hear such a combination of terrific sounds as then echoed through the valley of Chaluçet.

Sheltered as they were, however, the hail was no longer to be feared, and the thunder was more awful than dangerous; but a greater peril than any they had yet undergone awaited them, even at the moment when they thought themselves secure. The hail gradually became mingled with rain, then ceased, and gave way to a deluge that poured down from the sky. The large lumps of ice, which lay

piled up more than a foot in height at the mouth of the cavern, began to melt. Large drops of water percolating through the arch of the cave dropped with a heavy splash upon the ground; some pieces of the rock of the vault fell likewise; and at the same time a rushing sound, differing from all which had been heard before, came suddenly upon the ear. A rivulet was first seen trickling along the path at the entrance of the cavern, driving away the hail before it; and then, with a hissing, foamy rush down from the hill above, swept an actual torrent, rising, as it passed, somewhat above the level ground of the cave, and pouring in with an eddying whirl so as to cover the feet of the poor travellers with water. Not calculating how high it would rise, Francis de Langy caught up Julie in his arms, preparing to rush forth with her, but paused instantly, seeing that it must naturally flow down the hill, and could not inundate the place of their retreat above a few inches more.

At that instant, however, the abbé started up, exclaiming, "Quick, Francis! quick, my child! Away, away! the cave is falling in!" and on he darted towards the mouth.

● He reached it not, however; for, before he could do so, a torrent of falling cinders and scoræ poured down from above, and struck him to the ground. There was a sad and terrible cry, the mouth of the cavern was at once blocked up, and all was darkness.

CHAPTER IX.

WE must now return for a time to the banks of the stream, and to the somewhat discourteous fisherman, who had chosen to follow his solitary sport rather than accompany the travellers over the mountain. The name by which Julie addressed him must have already made the reader aware that he is not a new acquaintance; but, from the description which we gave of his person when at the Ferme Godard, he certainly would not be recognised at the period of which we now speak. The tall, well formed, active stripling of fourteen or fifteen had grown into a man of immense powers of body: not much above the ordinary height, being about five feet eleven, but displaying a frame of great breadth; deep-chested, long-armed, thin in the flank, and without the slightest approach to fatness, but muscular to an extraordinary degree. His features were short and small, but good; his forehead large and capacious, but with the back of the head perhaps still more so, and with those parts of the skull in which phrenologists suppose the organs of observation and calculation to be developed in a remarkable manner. To speak by the

card, and employ the technology with which our phrenological friends have furnished us, we will point out that the organ of reverence in his head, though not absolutely wanting, was very small indeed, but that the organ of benevolence was large and protuberant. Thus, if we might judge, by what was on the outside of his skull, of what was in the inside, and, from both, of what was the character of his mind and disposition, we should have a very curious compound of qualities: considerable intellectual powers, with strong animal passions; not much respect for anything, but a good deal of kindness of feeling. A few more traits, dear reader would make it a perfect Frenchman.

The expression of the countenance—in which, to say sooth we put as much faith as in phrenology—bore out these indications perfectly. There was a shrewd, intelligent, keen and rapid look, with no ferocity or harshness in it, but a great deal of determination; and that sidelong, half-averted glance which we noticed in him as a youth was now altogether gone, the place thereof being supplied by a sort of impenetrable, *nonchalant* aspect, assumed upon certain occasions.

The reader must not suppose that any great change had taken place in his character, thus to vary the expression of his countenance. The fact is, that when a youth, though not educated by any of his relations with the soundest principles in the world, yet his faults and vices—and they were not a few—were new to him; and the belief that they must be apparent to and condemned by every one he met with gave him that downcast look which we have before mentioned.

He had disposed of it, however, in the most natural manner possible; and having discovered two things—first, that his fellow-men were not near so sharp-sighted as he had imagined; and, secondly, that there were a great many as bad as himself, and a great many very much worse—he got somewhat conceited, not exactly of his bad actions, but of the dexterity and courage with which he committed them.

We have said that he was not conceited of the actions themselves, and, in truth, his tendency was rather away from them; for, in reality, they were committed more from a general want of principle than from an inherent inclination to wrong; and as the desires and passions of youth, the love of adventure, and the recklessness of consequences, diminished by slight degrees with years, the temptations were diminished also; and he would just as soon have employed his wit in doing what was right, if the opportunity had presented itself, as in doing what was wrong. Habit, indeed—habit was a strong counterpoise; but a man of good intellect and not very corrupt inclinations generally discovers sooner or later that the weight of worldly advantage lies on the side of good

conduct, as well as all the moral inducements; and thus there is ever something with a reasonable being to counterbalance bad habit, if unfortunate circumstances do not lead him farther and farther into vice, or society by its severity does not drive him to despair.

The lepers at one time were cast out from all communion with their fellow-men; they could associate but with lepers, and the disease increased and spread. At an after period men took them into hospitals and cured them, and the malady was gradually extinguished. Might it not be so with the leprosy of the mind?

To return to Jean Marais, however. He remained fishing in the stream till the party by whom he had been accosted began to climb the hill; and then he said to himself, "Now I will get back to Chalucet, and be off as fast as possible. I do not covet the jail at Clermont, particularly after the specimen I have had of it, where, with our good laws of France, I might very likely remain for nine months to come. No, no; I will keep out of the way till something about this young scapegrace has been discovered. And yet the girl did not seem to know anything of my situation; and a nice girl, too, she is—a great deal to good for my vagabond master."

While he thus meditated, or rather murmured to himself—for his thoughts took an audible turn—he was busily undoing his fishing-tackle; but just at that moment, luckily for himself and for others, his eye lighted upon a remarkably fine trout, the patriarch of the stream, who, lying not far from the surface, with his snout to the current and his fins moving slowly to keep himself in one place, seemed to invite the angler to try his skill upon him. Jean Marais had too much of the spirit of a sportsman to resist the temptation. He put his rod together again, and cast his fly lightly on the surface of the water, within a few inches of the mouth of his destined prize. For some little time the trout was obdurate, and ten minutes or a quarter of an hour was spent in teasing him to rise. At length, however, as if in a fit of irritation, the fish darted at the fly, was instantly hooked, and, conscious of his powers, darted away, nearly breaking the line that held him. Jean Marais was as skilful a fisherman as Izaak Walton; and, though we will not attempt to describe, with our quaint old friend's minuteness, the sport that ensued, suffice it to say that it cost the angler nearly three-quarters of an hour to exhaust the speckled tenant of the stream. At length, however, he succeeded in landing on the bank as fine a trout as ever was taken in Auvergne, a land justly celebrated for them.

When it was fairly caught, he once more began to pack

up his fishing-tackle; but he did not do so without one or two wistful looks at the sky, and then at the path by which he had come down the mountain. But the first clap of thunder, which our travellers had heard on the top of the hill, warmed him in the valley of what was about to take place.

"No time!" he said; "no time! I must get to my rock;" and, gathering up the fish he had caught, his rod, his lines, and his basket, without staying to put them in order, he walked through the stream, ran up the green bank on the other side, and made the best of his way to a spot where a large fragment of granite, in rolling down, long ages before, had fallen slantingly against an immense mass of lava, so as to form a sort of hut, somewhat like the foundation of a child's house of cards. Some vegetable mould had gathered, by one means or another, on the top of the rock; and, a small stunted ash-tree having planted itself in the crevice where the two stones met, like the feather in a warrior's cap, a wild bird was perched in the branches, singing gaily as Jean Marais approached.

It darted out when he came near; and he exclaimed, with a light laugh, "There—away with you! away with you! I give you two minutes to get home, and if you don't, the hail will catch you."

Thus saying, he bent himself down, and got under the little canopy formed by the two stones, drawing in his fishing-tackle and his trout, and crouching himself into as comfortable a position as he could, without exposing any part of his person or his goods to the pitiless pelting of the storm. The aperture of his little stony hut looked directly upon the black face of the volcano; and he gazed up at it, saying to himself, "I wonder where they have got to!"

The moment after, he saw Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne running down the path towards the cave, followed by the Abbé Arnoux. When he beheld the young lady fall, it is but justice to good Jean Marais to say, that his first impulse made him start up, as if to help her; but down he sat again immediately, watching with not uninterested eyes while Francis de Langy carried her into the cave, and then came out to bring in the abbé.

"He's a fine young fellow, that," said Jean Marais. "I wonder who that is."

As the reader well knows, the limits of a hail-storm are very sharply defined; and in many districts of France, balls of ice, the size of eggs, will fall on one side of a road, tearing vineyards and corn-fields to pieces, while the other side shall be perfectly free in the clear sunshine, without a single hail-stone touching it. In the present instance, the storm

came sweeping across the valley towards Jean Marais, as in a dim black wall, seamed with a number of perpendicular lines, were advancing directly against him; and so thick and tremendous did the hail become, that very speedily the immense volcanic mountain before his eyes grew indistinct and dark, so that for full half-an-hour the cavern in which the travellers had taken refuge was lost to his sight.

We shall not again describe the storm, which we have already dwelt upon enough in the preceding chapter. The lightning blazed, the thunder roared, the hail-stones fell as before; and Jean Marais, well contented with his retreat, looked out, saying to himself, "Now, if I had murdered that young vagabond the marquis, as his foolish mother says, I should be in a great fright, I suppose, and think the devil was going to take me."

In his comfortable place of refuge he amused himself as well as he could, looking at the fish he had caught, rolling up his lines, cleaning his hooks, and taking very little notice of the storm, except every now and then to gaze forth for an instant when the thunder was particularly violent, and exclaim, in a mocking tone, "Well, upon my honour!" till at length the hail became mingled with rain, the streams began rushing down from the hills, the thunder diminished in frequency and loudness, and the grim features of the opposite rocks began to show themselves more distinctly through the dim grey deluge.

"Ay," cried Jean Marais, "a pretty morning's work, upon my life! But, hark!—what's that?" and, gazing out again, he saw an immense quantity of stones and scoria, and large masses of rock, come rolling down the face of the opposite precipice, bounding and thundering into the stream.

His eyes instantly ran up towards the mouth of the cave where he had beheld the travellers take refuge. He could no longer see it. He looked to the right, to the left—it was gone!

"Body of life!" he exclaimed, "it must have fallen in upon them!" and, leaving fish, and fishing-tackle, and everything else behind him, he darted out, rushed through the stream, which was by this time up to his middle, and which, strong as he was, nearly bore him away, and with the agility of a goat climbed straight up to where the cavern had been.

The rain was still pouring down in fury, a thousand streams were rushing over all the faces of the rock, but the little path, which Julie and her companions had descended to reach the cavern, was visible for a considerable way from the top of the hill. Then came a space where everything seemed to be cast into rough confusion, showing clearly where a considerable body of earth and rubbish had slipped down the

hill; and then, about fifty or sixty yards farther on, the line of the path could be traced again, winding forward to the mouth of another cave. The cinders and scoriae left by the descent of the mass which had fallen rendered the footing between one point of the little way and another both difficult and dangerous. But Jean Marais, without hesitating a moment, sometimes balancing himself with difficulty on his feet, sometimes clinging with his hands and lying almost flat to the face of the mountain, traced on what he conceived the direction which the path had taken, examining accurately every step of ground as if he were looking for some lost jewel. At length a small projection of the rock gave him a further hold, and under a mass of the more solid lava higher up he perceived a small aperture, scarcely large enough to admit a man's arm. It was somewhat above his head, and the task of reaching it was by no means easy; but at length he accomplished it, and, bringing his face close to the hole, he looked in. All was darkness, however, but he thought he heard something like a low groan; and he exclaimed aloud, "Are you there? are you there?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried a voice from within; "help us quick! Give us air, give us air!"

"I must fetch assistance," replied Jean Marais; "keep up your spirits; do not fear; you shall soon be delivered."

"Give us air!" answered the voice; "give us air! She is fainting! she is dying!"

"Oh, no, no, Francis!" cried another voice; "I am better, I am better now. It was hope I wanted."

"Bring help quick, then!" shouted the first voice.

"Stay," said Jean Marais; "stay. I can give you air, too, perhaps. Here is a lump of rock I can roll down; but I must take care lest I go down with it;" and, fixing his two hands firmly upon a large block of stone of more than a hundred pounds in weight, he rolled it slowly over, till, freed from the rubbish in which it was embedded, it bounded down the hill, rushed over the green slope, and plunged into the stream.

"Take courage! take courage!" cried Jean Marais; "I will go and bring the folks from Chalucet, and have you out speedily. I must not miss the spot, however," he continued, speaking to himself. "There, that shall be my landmark;" and taking off his hat he set it upon a projecting piece of rock by which he had climbed up, put a large stone in it to keep it firm, and then set out for the hamlet at a pace which put his life in danger at every minute.

CHAPTER X.

THE most serviceable gift in the ordinary course of life is common sense; but in a career of danger and difficulty there is another, which is perhaps but a modification of it, and which is termed presence of mind. I have called it a gift, because I believe that it is perfectly innate and never to be acquired; but certainly, if ever any one was born with that combination of ready courage, quick calculation, and promptitude of action, which is so termed, it was Francis de Langy. The moment that he beheld the abbé stricken to the earth, he perceived that to pass in time was impossible; and, casting his arms round Julie, he drew her suddenly back from the shower of stones and cinders that was falling—not to the part of the cave where they had previously been seated, but at once, and with a bound, to the eastern side of the cavern, where he had remarked, long before, that the solid lava formed, as it were, one side of an arch, under which he rationally hoped for shelter.

He found it as he had expected; but the very first instant of thought made him almost regret that he had obeyed the impulse, and avoided being crushed under the falling mass. All was darkness; he and the being whom he loved were shut in, as in a living tomb, within the hard bosom of the mountain. A long, a lingering, a terrible death was before them! Even if the air which they then breathed was not soon exhausted, famine must speedily reach them. He must have the agony of seeing her die by the most painful want, without the power of giving her the slightest assistance or support. Such was the terrible picture that imagination first presented; such the only fate that he believed was reserved for them. Julie clung to him, trembling violently; and he, pressing her to his heart, lifted up his eyes, as if seeking for that heaven which was shut out from his sight, and which he believed that neither would ever behold again. He would fain have said something to soothe and comfort her, but the words of consolation died away in his heart and on his tongue; and, unable to utter a sound, he pressed his lips upon her cheek, as if it were the parting kiss of two beings doomed to speedy death.

At that moment there was a low groan. "Ha, Julie!" he exclaimed; "there is the poor abbé! Perhaps I can extricate him and bring him here. Stay for a moment. I will try."

"Oh! it will fall upon you and crush you, Francis!" cried Julie.

"Nay, nay; I must try, dear Julie," he replied; and, feel-

ing his way forward with his hands, he soon grasped the good man's cassock. His arm and his head were free, for he had been cast backwards in falling; but his chest was covered with a large mass of loose shingle, heaped up in a pile, and his legs up to his knees were buried in a mass which blocked up the mouth of the cavern.

Francis de Langy easily removed the pile that was resting on his breast; but, when he attempted to disengage the rest of his frame, a shower of small stones and cinders fell thick upon him, and well-nigh suffocated him. He persevered, however; and another low groan, as he did so, told him that the abbe still lived. The earth was loose and light; and, as he laboured to clear it away with his hands from the body of his poor tutor, a hope sprung up in his bosom of being able to save himself and her he loved.

In ten minutes he had succeeded so far as to draw the body away, though another shower of stones was the consequence; but, exclaiming, gladly, "I have freed him, Julie! I have freed him!" he bore the old man slowly and cautiously over the plashy floor of the cave towards the spot where he had left her."

"Julie! dear Julie!" he said as he approached, though the sensation of the air growing thick and warm almost deadened the hope which had arisen, "there is yet a chance; keep up your courage! The earth is soft and light, and easily moved; I can pull down some part into that side of the cave, and perhaps throw the rest down into the valley."

She made no answer; and Francis de Langy, becoming alarmed, put out his hand to feel if she was there. It rested upon her fair, soft neck as she bent her head down upon her hands. Her young lover's heart sank, and he thought, "The air is growing thick; she may faint and die before I can accomplish it."

At that moment, however, a loud voice, coming down apparently from the upper part of the cave, shouted, "Are you there? are you there?" And, oh! was there ever a sound on this earth so joyful to the ears of man?

The reader knows the reply, and knows also that, in a moment after, a gleam of light broke in upon the weary prisoners in their rocky dungeon. It was like hope; it *was* hope, and oh! what is not hope to man! The vitality of vitality, the life of his life, the great motive power of all exertion, the strengthener, the consoler, the stay, the great battle-sword that cleaves through the armour of all adversaries, the conqueror that strikes down opposition, tramples on reverses, bursts open the gates of the tomb, and treads upon the neck of Death!

Hope came to them; and though the ray of light was so

faint that they could not even see each other's faces by its aid, looking merely like a dim star high up in the blank space around, it was sufficient for support, ay, and for joy; and, casting his arms round Julie, Francis de Langy exclaimed, "Thou art saved!"

These words, reader, put, as I have put them, in the second person singular, mean more in French than they do in English; but in any language they would have been sufficient to show to Julie d'Artonne what were the feelings of her young lover's heart: that she was his first thought; that her safety was the object first desired; her danger the anguish far more felt than his own.

"And thou too, Francis!" she said; "and thou too!" and she leaned her forehead on his bosom.

Never did love before or since find its first voice amongst such scenes and circumstances.

A long hour succeeded—the passing of which we will not attempt to describe—ere any further sounds gave notice to the young prisoners that deliverance was near. At length, however, the tones which they had heard before again reached their ear, asking if they were all well.

"No, anything but well," replied Francis de Langy: "the abbé is much hurt; dead, I fear, or dying."

"Matin!" cried the man; and immediately the sounds of pickaxes and spades rang through the cavern, with voices directing and commenting as the work proceeded.

A moment or two after, some of the earth and stones rolled down into the cave, and the aperture through which the light appeared was considerably enlarged. Julie and Francis de Langy turned their first look upon each other, but their second was to the poor abbé; and by the dim glimmer, which was all that yet reached them, they knelt down beside him and gazed upon his features. His cassock was soiled by mud and dirt, and a good deal of the loose ashes was adhering to his hair; but, as far as they could distinguish, his features were calm and placid, and it was evident that he still breathed, though the groan which had once or twice burst from his bosom had ceased.

The rushing sound of falling earth was now clearly distinguished, mingled with the rolling of large masses of the rock down the face of the precipice. The light grew clearer, the heavy air more free; and soon the arms and chest of a man labouring hard with a spade could be discerned, with the blue sky behind him. The cheerful sunshine, too, shone upon his shoulder and his hand, showing that the storm had passed away entirely; and, oh! what a bright and beautiful sight did that simple gleam seem to the eyes of those who had thought that they should never behold it again! But

we must not pause further upon their sensations. It required the labour of four men, during at least three-quarters of an hour, to enlarge sufficiently the small aperture, which the mass of falling earth had left in its descent, for a human being to pass in and out, some masses of stone, which had come down with the rest, obstructing the labour, and requiring both skill and strength to remove. Jean Marais, however, worked like a slave, and by his better sense and knowledge effected as much, at least, as all the three good Auvergnats together. At length a sufficient passage was opened; but still it was not an easy one, for the loose shingle and rock had rolled down into the cave, filling up nearly two-thirds of the space; and when Jean Marais himself entered to give assistance, he fell twice before he reached the bottom of the mound.

"I will carry her, I will carry her!" cried Francis de Langy.

"If you do, I shall have to carry you," cried Jean Marais; but the youth caught Julie up in his arms as lightly as if she had been a child, and with that strength and power which strong and resolute feeling generally gives, he bore her out, while the stout Picard followed him close, steadying the young gentleman with his arm whenever the stones rolled under his feet.

"Thank God!" cried Francis de Langy when he once more set his fair burden down in the fresh air. "Thank God!"

But the sudden change was too great for Julie d'Artonne; she turned pale, her head drooped, and she fell back fainting, with the first breath of the wind upon her cheek.

When Julie reopened her eyes, she felt herself gently borne along in a large, rough brown cloak, at that time in use amongst the Auvergnat shepherds, which had been stretched upon two poles so as to make a sort of litter for her. A contrivance somewhat similar had been applied to carry the poor Abbé Arnoux; and two or three of the herds from the mountains having been added to the party who had dug out the travellers, Mademoiselle d'Artonne and the good ecclesiastic were carried by the shortest and most convenient paths to the little hamlet of Chalucet. The women of the village and the neighbourhood instantly surrounded the sufferers; and the abbé was soon stretched upon a bed, with kind female hands tending him, and every simple means applied to recal him to consciousness. As such accidents often happened in the mountains, the treatment of Monsieur Arnoux was not so unskilful as might have been expected, for experience is the best teacher of medicine. On Julie, too, the good women would fain have tried their powers; but she had quite recovered from her fainting fit ere she reached the

hamlet, although she felt too weak and exhausted, after all she had gone through, to ride back to Pontgibaud.

For his part, Francis de Langy resolved not to quit her; and all that remained for him to do was to send a messenger to Pontgibaud to seek a surgeon, and to communicate the disasters they had met with, and the state they were in, to Monsieur and Madame d'Artonne. For this double purpose Francis de Langy determined to employ Jean Marais, and accordingly went out of the cottage to which Julie had been brought, in order to look for him. As some time had been spent, one way or another, since their arrival, he found their deliverer with his fishing-rod in his hand, a basket on his back, and a small parcel of clothes crowning the whole, apparently setting out upon some distant journey.

The first words the young gentleman addressed to him were thanks, and, luckily for his purpose, one of the expressions which he used was, "I look upon it that Mademoiselle d'Artonne and myself owe our lives entirely to you; but you must do us another service, Monsieur Marais. I wish you particularly to mount one of the horses which brought us here, and, riding it to Pontgibaud, send the best surgeon you can find as speedily as possible. I should then feel extremely obliged, if you would go to the little inn called the 'Demie-Lune,' and communicate in the gentlest manner you can to Monsieur and Madame d'Artonne that we have met with a frightful accident, but that Mademoiselle Julie is safe and uninjured. Perhaps Monsieur d'Artonne may not have returned, but you will certainly find the countess there."

The man looked down with a hesitating, or rather calculating expression, and began his reply by saying, "Why, you see, monsieur;" but suddenly stopped, and then asked, "Can you not send one of these other men?"

"I can do so, certainly," answered Francis de Langy, somewhat surprised at his reluctance; "but I wish some one to bear the intelligence who will break it with gentleness. Besides, I think you are very well deserving of a high reward for saving our lives, and I am sure Monsieur d'Artonne will be very glad to give it when he is aware of the circumstances."

The valet took off his hat and made him a low bow, replying with a comic air, "Rewards are pleasant things, sir."

He then fell into thought again; but the moment after he roused himself, and put his hat upon his head with an air of mock determination, saying, "Well, I'll dare the adventure! I may want a good friend just now to help me at a pinch. Come, sir; I will do it."

Francis de Langy was totally unaware of those particular

points in Jean Marais' history which made him hesitate to go to Pontgibaud and present himself before the Count d'Artonne; but in replying at a venture, he hit the mark, saying, "If you do want a friend in need, depend upon it you will find one in the Count d'Artonne, after saving his daughter from a lingering and horrible death. Nor will my uncle—I may call him father—the Vicomte de St. Medard, be less grateful to you."

"Monsieur de St. Medard!" cried the man. "Ah, *bon Dieu!* Is it possible? are you little Francis de Langy, whom I have had upon my knee a hundred times? Well, that is strange enough!"

An explanation such as the reader may conceive now ensued; but Francis de Langy made it a short one, although he was not a little interested in the account the man gave of himself, and of his own early years at the Ferme Godard. No further difficulties were made by Jean Marais; and, mounting the horse which was speedily made ready, he set off at as rapid a rate as the bad road would permit, and reached Pontgibaud in little less than an hour.

As he went, according to a habit that he had, he held a good deal of conversation with himself upon his own situation and prospects. "Well," he said, "I am certainly the luckiest of all unlucky dogs; for no sooner do I fall into a scrape, from which there seems no escape except to be set free after many months' imprisonment, on account of a crime I never dreamt or thought of, than I stumble upon two powerful protectors, and secure their certain good-will by the merest accident in the world. Well, now, I must manage this matter delicately, and break the tidings to these people as one breaks the top of an egg, little by little. Let me see! how I shall do it? I have it! I have it!— But we must send the surgeon first to take care of the good old gentleman in the cassock, though he'll be as dead as a sole before the doctor gets there. There's not as much life in him now as in an empty tinder-box. But sometimes miracles are performed still, and so we'll send the surgeon."

Thus murmuring to himself, on rode Jean Marais till he reached the little, old-fashioned town of Pontgibaud, where he speedily found out the only surgeon that it contained, and who was consequently a great man in his way. He despatched him to Chalucet as fast as a horse could carry him, telling him that a count, a countess, and the Bishop of Clermont had all tumbled down the rocks together and half broken their necks. He then directed his steps to the inn, where, at the door, which looked down upon the stream of the Chalamont, stood a post-chaise with smoking horses, apparently just arrived.

Walking into the kitchen, Jean Marais was in two minutes quite intimate with the host and hostess, the cook, and all the servants, male and female; and it luckily so happened for his purpose that none of the attendants on the party of travellers were at that moment in the peculiar apartment he had selected for his *début*.

"Now, Monsieur Malot," he said, taking down the load from his shoulder, "I know you have got some guests of quality here, and I have brought you a basket of as beautiful trout as ever you saw to entertain them with. Here are seven magnificent fellows, none of them less than a couple of pounds; and for them you shall give me dinner, supper, a bed, and a breakfast."

The host admired the trout with his eyes, and was taking up the last and largest one which had been caught, when Jean Marais laid his hand upon it, exclaiming, "Not that one, not that one; he is not included. Why, he weighs four pounds if he weighs an ounce, and I destine him as a present from myself to the Count d'Artonne. So, give me down a dish, Madame Malot, and I will carry it up with my own hands."

The good hostess very willingly obeyed his injunctions, knowing that the fish must be dressed for her guests to eat it, and that she must make the sauce, which repays a French innkeeper as well as to set brilliants recompenses a jeweller; and, a large dish having been brought down, Jean Marais was ushered up to a room tenanted for the time by the Count and Countess d'Artonne and their guests. He entered in great state, bearing the magnificent trout before him, and found the two gentlemen standing beside Madame d'Artonne, and talking with her on the proceedings of the day.

"Ha! Jean Marais?" cried the count when he saw him, a shade coming over his countenance, not exactly of displeasure nor of suspicion, but apparently rather of sadness. "They told me that you were in prison."

"So I was, sir," said the valet, bowing low, with a smile at the double meaning of the words he was about to use; "so I was, sir, for three days; but at the end of that time they let me out; and as I have been fishing about the country, and heard you were here, I have brought you this fine trout as the most acceptable present I could offer you."

"It is a very fine trout indeed," replied the count, looking at the fish; "why, it must weigh four or five pounds. We will have it dressed for dinner to-day, Elise."

"Nay, sir," said Jean Marais, gravely; "I hope you will have it stuffed and put under a glass case."

Monsieur de St. Medard smiled; and the count replied, "No, really, my good friend; though it is a very fine trout,

I do not think it is worthy of quite so distinguished an honour as that."

"Now, really, I think it is," answered Jean Marais; "for this very fish, noble sir, once saved a young lady's life."

The whole party looked at the speaker with some astonishment, and were all silent for a moment.

"You are a jester, Jean Marais," cried Monsieur d'Artonne, at length. But the countess interposed, with a cheek somewhat pale, saying, "He means something, Alphonse. When did it save a young lady's life?"

"This very day, madam," answered Jean Marais.

"Julie!" cried Madame d'Artonne immediately; "he means Julie! Good God! where is she? what has happened?"

"She is quite well, madam," replied Jean Marais, "and quite safe at Chalucet; but if it had not been for my staying to catch this fish, she would now have been buried in the heart of the mountain;" and, the worst being told, he proceeded to relate all that had occurred.

"Luckily," said the count, when he concluded, "it is to you we owe her safety, Jean Marais, not to the trout; so that we can reward her deliverer. Poor girl! what she must have gone through! And poor Monsieur Arnoux, too! I regret him as much as if he were a brother."

"While there is life, there is hope," answered the viscount. "I could spare my right hand better than I could that good old man. Come, d'Artonne, let us go at once to Chalucet, and see what can be done."

"I will go too! I will go too!" cried Madame d'Artonne.

"I fear the road is only practicable for horses," replied Monsieur de St. Medard.

"I will ride, I will walk, I will do anything!" exclaimed the mother; "but I must see my child!"

"You can get within less than a quarter of a league in the carriage," said Jean Marais; "and it may serve to bring mademoiselle back again; for she was not at all hurt, but only faint and exhausted from terror."

His plan was adopted; horses were again put on to the carriage, and in a short time Julie d'Artonne was clasped in her mother's arms; while Monsieur de St. Medard grasped the hand of Francis de Langy, and advanced with him to the bed on which the good abbé was stretched. The surgeon was sitting beside him, and made a sign for the viscount to keep silence; but Monsieur Arnoux was able to look up as he recognised his friend's step, and acknowledged his presence by a faint smile.

CHAPTER XI.

THE expedition, which had begun in joy and expectation, ended in sorrow and anxiety, as so many others have done. The poor Abbé Arnoux, crushed and bruised, hung for three or four days between life and death, and perhaps was only saved for the time by the unremitting attention of his pupil and Monsieur de St. Medard. Julie also suffered, though but slightly in comparison, from the terror she had endured and the scenes she had gone through; and, when Francis de Langy every morning walked or rode over from the little hamlet of Chalucet to Pontgibaud, he had the satisfaction of seeing the colour come back warmly into her cheek, and health sparkle up in her eyes once more.

Having said so much of the principal personages of the tale, we must turn for a moment or two to our respectable friend, Jean Marais, who, the second morning after the adventure in the mountains, stood before Monsieur and Madame d'Artonne, giving an account of himself and his proceedings, the whole of which would doubtless prove both interesting and instructive if we had space to lay it before the reader. We can but report a part, however, and that must be the portion which refers to the present story.

"Why, you know, Jean Marais," said the count; "you know very well that you are a great rogue."

Jean Marais made a low bow, replying with the most perfect self-satisfaction, "How should I otherwise be fit for the office of valet-de-chambre to a noble gentleman like the Marquis de Bausse?"

"Well, Jean," replied the count, "in regard to this accusation against you, which I am quite sure is false, and which you say you can prove to have been made without even ground of suspicion, I will take care that the matter be fully investigated, as you desire, within four-and-twenty hours after our arrival at Clermont; and you shall have every opportunity of establishing your innocence, so as not to be detained one moment longer than is necessary. You shall also have a reward of some kind, adequate to the service which you have rendered me; but indeed, my good Jean Marais, as to my taking you into our service, that, I fear, is quite out of the question. You know very well that, besides the love-making to the maids, which would be endless, you would do nothing but cheat me from morning to night."

Jean Marais laughed, without showing the slightest symptom either of shame or indignation.

"On my word of honour, Monsieur d'Artonne," he said,

"you make a very great mistake. Every man has certain principles upon which he acts, and mine would prevent me from cheating you even of a sou. The matter is very different, indeed, when I am with such a master as the Marquis de Bausse. It was a part of my duty to cheat him, else I render the old proverb of no avail. 'Like master, like man,' noble sir, is much more universally true than people believe. If my master leads the way, as a matter of course I follow; and, if he runs very fast, he must not be surprised at my treading on his heels; but with you the matter would be different. I should never think of practising on you any such tricks as are every day played by the fashionable valet on the fashionable master. I would not go out in your clothes and call myself by your name, nor half-empty your snuff-box every night into a jar lent me by the tobacconist on purpose to keep my earnings fresh against the time for returning them to his shop. You would never lose four or five canes in a year, and be persuaded that you had left them in a *fiacre* or in a friend's house. Your shirts would not be frequently mislaid by the washerwoman; your stock of pocket-handkerchiefs would not daily decrease; you would not have an opportunity of seeing how well your own cravats look upon the neck of your valet, nor admire your gloves upon his hands before they had been twice on your own. If your purse remained in your pocket when you went to bed, every lous would answer to the muster-roll next morning; and the sous would rest in peace upon the edge of the *scrutoire*. I can assure you I should be perfectly exemplary, unless I saw you begin to gamble or cheat at cards, or say sweet things to madame's *femme-de-chambre*;" and he bowed reverently to the countess as he spoke.

"A pleasant picture you give, certainly, of a valet's life," said Monsieur d'Artonne; "but I am afraid, my good Jean Marais, that, even if there were a probability of your keeping all your promises, I could not grant your request, for my servants are old and faithful friends, whom I am not likely to part with, and I have fully as many of them as I want."

"Happy Monsieur d'Artonne," exclaimed Jean Marais, "and unhappy I!—But it is always so in life; when we want to escape temptation, we find the door shut upon us; so I shall have nothing to do but to go on with sweet Monsieur de Bausse when he comes back again, which, of course, will be the case when he has spent all his money; or else to get myself a new place with some other noble gentleman of the same kind, where, in duty to myself, I shall be obliged to cheat him from morning till night, or lose my character for ever amongst my friends and companions."

"Well, well," Jean Marais, replied the count, we will

see what is to be done for you: perhaps I may be able to find you a better place than you have; but remember, if I do so, and you dishonour my recommendation, I will cut your ears off with my own hands."

"Sir, they are perfectly at your service," answered Jean Marais, making him a low bow; "but, in the mean time, I may look to you to get me clear of this charge?"

"Nay, my good friend," cried the count, "I did not exactly say that: I merely promised that you should have an opportunity of establishing your innocence at once, if you can do so, and should not be kept for months in prison, as is too much the custom in France, whether an accused person be guiltless or criminal."

"That is all I want, that is all I want, sir," replied Jean Marais, "for I know that there cannot be even a cause of suspicion shown against me; and, to tell you the truth, sir, I am afraid of my morals."

"How so?" demanded the count; "I should think, my good friend, that your morals were very safe."

"Oh! you flatter me, sir," answered Jean Marais; "but I can assure you that a prison in France is not the best school of virtue that one can be in. It is only on the outside of the walls that one protests one's innocence; in the inside each one rivals the other in telling how many crimes he has committed."

Jean Marais might, perhaps, have gone on for some time longer entertaining the count with his views of society; but at that moment Monsieur de St. Medard entered, and the valet withdrew. The viscount came to propose a new arrangement, although it had only been that morning determined that they were to stay for three or four days longer at Pontgibaud, in order that the good Abbé Arnoux might be the better enabled to bear a journey.

"You will think me somewhat whimsical," said Monsieur de St. Medard; "but the truth is, I begin much to doubt the skill of our worthy surgeon here, and I am anxious that the abbé should have more scientific advice and better care. We can easily have a litter made, in which his bed may be laid, and he himself carried to Clermont without any fatigue."

"Oh! if he arrives at Clermont," cried the countess, "he must not stop short of the Château d'Artonne; "and the better care and tendance he will have with us will make up for the short additional distance."

Thus then was it settled. The remainder of that day was passed in constructing the litter, and rendering it as comfortable as circumstances would allow; and early on the following morning the whole party set out upon their return, the sick man being borne on the shoulders of four stout

Auvergnats, with a relay of bearers following, by which means he was brought without much fatigue to Clermont, and thence to the Château d'Artonne.

The viscount and Francis de Langy accompanied him on horseback; but the count and countess, with Julie, had gone on, and were ready to receive their guests on the terrace before the house. While Monsieur Arnoux was carried up to the comfortable chamber which had been prepared for him, and Julie lingered for a minute or two with Francis de Langy in the gardens looking at the setting sun, Monsieur de Medard followed his host and hostess into the château, to examine the contents of a large packet which the count said had been waiting for him for several days, but which the servants had foolishly neglected to forward.

The moment the viscount read the first lines, he exclaimed, "This is very unfortunate! A summons to Versailles, my dear D'Artonne, to give his majesty information regarding Pondicherry. It has reached me somewhat late, and there must be no more delay; we must depart to-morrow without fail."

Julie and Francis were entering at the very moment that he uttered the last words, and it would be difficult to describe the look of consternation which came upon those two young faces at the tidings they heard. Madame d'Artonne marked it with a smile, and exclaimed at once, "But the abbé cannot go; and Francis shall not, I declare!"

"Leave him with us, St. Medard," said the count; "he is in duty bound to stay and nurse his tutor. We will keep him, too, as a pledge that you yourself come back, and fulfil your promise to us of staying at least a week."

Monsieur de St. Medard looked towards Francis de Langy; and though the young man cast his eyes upon the ground, and expressed no wish of any kind, yet it needed little skill to perceive that his inclinations turned not towards Versailles.

The matter, then, was settled as the Count d'Artonne proposed; and although we have not said much hitherto of Julie's feelings in regard to Francis de Langy, yet it must be acknowledged that her young heart beat joyfully with sensations she never thought of inquiring into. The age had not come with her for shrinking from the first approaches of love, for trembling at the presence of the new spirit within her. At that age Love assumes not his form of power and might, overawing the heart and mastering all the senses; but, on the contrary, he comes in the sweeter and the gentler form of the winged child, his quiver hidden, and his bow behind his back. Young, happy friendship is the name he takes; and all Julie thought she wished to keep was the kind com-

panion whom chance had thrown so fortunately in her way. Perhaps she might think it a little strange that she was so very, very glad he was going to stay; but then that was easily accounted for. He was so noble, he was so kind; he was the first companion, too, whom she had ever had; the first to whom her heart and mind had opened; the first who had entered into all her thoughts and feelings; the first who had taught her what it was to have a brother. All these reasons were summed up in a moment in the mind of Julie; and so little idea had she of what was beneath them all, that she expressed her joy warmly and openly; while Francis, on the contrary, said not a word, though his looks were quite sufficient.

A messenger had been sent forward for the most skilful surgeon in the neighbourhood; and in about half-an-hour he arrived at the chateau, much to the satisfaction of Monsieur de St. Medard, who was anxious to hear some really good opinion upon the case of the poor Abbé Arnoux. Unwilling, however, to give any bias to the views of the man of healing, he suffered the surgeon to visit his patient alone, and waited in a neighbouring chamber for his coming forth, for nearly an hour.

When the surgeon at length appeared, his opinion of the case was very doubtful. "I have hope," he said, "I have much hope, that a perfect recovery may be effected; but still I will by no means assure you, sir, that such will be the case; the injuries received have been very severe, the consequences will be long and difficult to deal with, and the result, I must say, though I hope for the best, is uncertain."

"Do you believe that conversation may be hurtful to your patient?" demanded the viscount; "for, as I am unexpectedly obliged to go to Versailles, I should like to sit with him for an hour to-night."

"Oh, you may do so," replied the surgeon; "it will not injure him, if you leave him whenever you see he is becoming fatigued."

CHAPTER XII.

It was between nine and ten at night when Monsieur de St. Medard, having been told that the Abbé Arnoux had obtained an hour's sleep and was much refreshed, entered his room to bid him farewell before his departure for Paris. Approaching his bed with a quiet and cautious step, the viscount sat down on a chair at his side, and, looking at the

calm and placid though worn features of the good ecclesiastic, he said, "You look better, Arnoux; your journey seems to have done you good."

"I feel much better," replied the abbé; "I feel much better, my dear friend. I seem to breathe more freely here. I thank God for it most sincerely, Monsieur de St. Medard; and I can assure you, whatever you may think, that it is the greatest of all comforts to be able to bless and thank God for any happiness or any mere relief that he sends us."

The viscount smiled. "I admire religion very much, you know, abbé," he said, "and think it an excellent thing; but yet I cannot see how it makes any difference. A man is happy or unhappy; he suffers pain or is relieved; but it matters very little to him, methinks, whence the relief or the happiness comes."

"Not at all," replied the abbé, with a degree of eagerness which conquered his corporeal weakness; "it matters in the most essential degree. The higher and the finer emotions of the heart are all of them the sources of our most intense delight, and none more so than gratitude. A slight difficulty of breathing is easily borne, and to be relieved from it is a very ordinary comfort looked at abstractly; but when we trace it up to the mercy of God, and look upon it as a fresh motive for thankfulness to Him who has given us a thousand others, a more expansive joy takes possession of the breast. The satisfaction is doubled by gratitude to the hand whence the relief comes; ay, and, moreover, in each indication of mercy towards us we find the materials of confidence, hope, and expectation."

"My good abbé," said the viscount, "you know I never like to talk upon these subjects; not because I wish in any degree to shut my own ears, but because I never like to say one word which may shake the faith of other people—a faith in which they are happy, and which I have no right to disturb. But when you speak upon this subject, one must answer you; and I will only point out that you, good devoted gentlemen, are like our loyal grandfathers in the time of Louis XIV. who used to go to the Bastille with the most humble resignation, and experience all the pleasures of gratitude when they were let out again after two or three years' imprisonment. He who has now sent you relief rolled down the rocks upon you; your gratitude in the one case would be naturally counterbalanced by your indignation in the other, if you did not regard God as a despotic king, like our Grand Monarque in the eyes of our countrymen a century ago."

"We regard him as an all-wise one," said the abbé; "and that, my dear friend, makes a very great difference."

Those who look upon a mere mortal as all-wise commit a very great sin, taking from the only Being who can possess such an attribute a part of his glory to robe a human idol withal. But if, in our belief of God's infinite wisdom and infinite goodness, we feel our hearts raised with joyful thankfulness for every act of mercy, the same convictions bring resignation, and deep confidence, and humble hope, at every act of chastisement which he may perform. Thus, every pleasure is heightened, and every pain diminished, by tracing each to the same great Source of wisdom and goodness."

The viscount paused thoughtfully for a moment or two. The truth of what the abbé said was apparent, but he would not grasp it as Monsieur Arnoux wished, and he ended his reverie by replying, "Yes, I know it is a very pleasant thing; I always thought so, and ever wished that I possessed it: but one's will has no power over one's convictions, my dear abbé, and my mind has been made up many years."

"But upon good grounds?" demanded the abbé. "How many changes in our views, Monsieur de St. Medard, take place in twenty years! how do our powers of reasoning become acuminated by time and exercise! Do you think that the same arguments would convince you to-day that convinced you a quarter of a century ago?"

"I really do not know," replied the viscount; "I am very hard to convince, my dear abbé, and am growing more and more so every day of my life. But what I wished to talk to you about," he continued, very willing to change the subject, "was quite another affair. I came to tell you that I have received a summons to Versailles, and may not return for a fortnight or three weeks. In the mean time Francis will remain here with you, and at my return I hope to find you perfectly well again."

The abbé shook his head. "Francis was here a minute ago," he said: "he told me you were going; and that is the reason, my dear friend, that I venture to speak with you upon a subject very near my heart. Pray listen to me for a few moments patiently. I believe, St. Medard, that we shall never meet again: I had wished that you might see me die, for I believed that the sight of how a fellow-being can meet the approach of death in Christian hope and faith might produce at least a new train of thought, which would lead you to quit the fatal errors which you have imbibed, and which render the grave a dark and gloomy abode indeed."

"You mistake, my dear friend," answered the viscount: "we philosophers, I can assure you, do not look upon the approach of annihilation with the horror that you perhaps

suppose,* believing that death is a more complete sleep, I could lay my head down to-morrow in the grave with as little care as upon my pillow this night."

"And without the hope of awaking?" demanded the abbé.

The viscount nodded his head.

"And with no fear of that waking?" said Monsieur Arnoux.

"None," answered his friend.

"I am sorry for it," replied the abbé: "what hopes do you not exclude yourself from! what glorious expectations do you not shut out! what sources of high and generous feeling do you not batten down and forcibly repress! I speak merely of this world, even supposing that there were not another. By the loss of its promises, its principles, its objects, you lose fully one-half of the joys which man may derive from the abundant springs of felicity in his own mixed nature."

"I am inclined to believe that we do, my dear abbé," said the viscount; "at all events, we lose a great deal; and, amongst other things, we lose those barriers and those inducements which supply the place of a fine moral sense to at least three-quarters of mankind. It is for this very reason, because I believe religion to be both a very happy and a very beneficial ingredient in the cup of life, that I never give voice to my own opinions, and would very willingly see the promulgation of such doctrines prohibited by law."

"Then what," asked the abbé in return—"what do you hold to be the origin of all religion? How did it arise? whence did it spring? Here is what you acknowledge to be a principle which gives happiness and virtue; which is strong enough to supply the place of moral sense where it is wanting; which is beneficial to society, and excellent for man himself; and yet it is altogether false, wrong, absurd! If it is a falsehood, it is an immorality; and by your own rules, as I have heard them a thousand times expounded, that which is immoral must be baleful in its effects. Whence did this extraordinary and anomalous excellence spring?"

"According to my belief, my dear abbé," replied the viscount, "from the heated imaginations of the East, fashioned afterwards into a peculiar form by some very wise and very good men, and receiving additions and alterations from time to time as the necessities of society required such changes."

"And all these very wise and good men," said the abbé, "while every one of them condemns the slightest deviation from truth, is engaged in promulgating falsehoods, ay, and *in manufacturing them wholesale?"

* Very nearly the same words have been ascribed to Gibbon; but such opinions were common just before the first French Revolution.

"But for the very best and greatest purposes," cried the viscount, a little heated.

"What!" exclaimed the abbé; "the good and the wise are to have a monopoly of falsehood, according to your code, and to use it for their purposes, and theirs alone? I am afraid, my dear viscount, that your ethics somewhat halt, and that your idea of good and wise men teaching lies, and at the same time denouncing lying, is not a bit less anomalous and inconceivable than that of a whole system of falsehood and absurdity, unworthy of the belief of any reasonable man, producing, when called religion, the happiest effects for individuals and society. One proposition or the other must be true: either religion is false, wicked, and detrimental, and those who framed it shameless impostors, or it is beneficial, blessed, and excellent, with God for its origin and truth for its foundation."

"My dear abbé," replied Monsieur de St. Medard, after musing thoughtfully for a moment or two, and apparently finding a difficulty in reconciling the admissions he had made with the conclusions naturally deduced from them—"my dear abbé, it is not for me to explain how these things are. You asked me how I thought religion arose: I say what I suppose to be possibly the case; I do not mean absolutely to assert that it is so. If I am convinced, you must bring forward proof to show that what you believe is true, and not attempt to puzzle me by making me explain a state of things I see exist, but to the origin and history of which I have paid but very little attention."

"My first object, my dear friend," replied the abbé, in a low tone, "is to puzzle you. Nay, answer me not with a jest, St. Medard! You unbelievers have a great habit of jesting with your own minds, killing an argument with a sarcasm, and dismissing an unpleasant truth with a sneer. My first object, I repeat, is to puzzle you; or, in short, to cast your preconceived notions upon these subjects into confusion. I know that you will not leave them so; I know that your first task will be to search, to inquire, to examine. Your mind is too clear, too precise, too strong to rest in doubt; and I believe that in the search, if you can but throw the prejudices of years behind you, you will find truth—that which man should seek beyond anything else."

"Indeed, my dear abbé," replied the viscount, "you cannot love it better than I do; but I will not suffer you to go on to-night; such discussions are too much for you."

"Nay, nay," cried the abbé, eagerly, raising himself up on his arm; "you must, indeed, hear me to-night, St. Medard, you will leave me unhappy; you will darken my bed of approach. Only give me a little of that drink, and hear me."

The viscount gave him the glass, and sat down again by his bedside; and after a momentary pause the abbé went on again.

"My object," he said, "is to prompt you to search—to search with a mind devoid of prejudice, with a heart clear of passion, with a spirit full of humility, with a mind open to truth. In the first place, then, I have sought from your own principles to make you doubt that religion springs from the imaginations of men, moulded into certain forms to suit certain purposes by men of genius. I think I *have* made you doubt it."

"You have," said the viscount, gravely; "and I will examine into that matter."

"Do," rejoined Monsieur Arnoux; "and the more you examine, the brighter will be the light that breaks upon you. You will find religion in some shape in every age and tribe of intellectual beings. You will find it becoming purer and purer as it approaches nearer to that grand stream of doctrine which all who have dispensed it assert to flow direct from God. You will there find everything embodied that morals can require, and the whole concluded and distinguished by the doctrine that God is truth. I call upon you as a reasonable man to satisfy your own mind of how religion rose in the human heart, of how this peculiar religion which Christians profess was first received, and how it has been transmitted. Remember I speak of religion itself, and not at all of the comments of men, which have sometimes, perhaps, elucidated, but often embarrassed it. This is my first object, to make you doubt and examine. If you find that you have not been right upon this point, you may, perhaps, doubt and examine some others; and then the first great inquiry, on which rest all others, will of course present itself once more to your mind, 'Is there or is there not a God,' who has given this knowledge of his existence to every tribe of earth, and who, it is asserted, has revealed himself, his attributes, and his will to some particular nations?"

"And why not to all?" demanded the viscount.

"That you may discover," replied the abbé, "as you go on; though I do not say that every question which you ask may be answered."

"And why not?" inquired the viscount.

"Because, my dear friend," replied the abbé, "there never yet was a man upon this earth whose mind could comprehend a thousandth part of the phenomena that are going on in this little globe; still less of those which are taking place in all the millions of worlds that roll in what we call the sky; still less in the infinite beyond. When you can comprehend all these things, explain, discuss, and judge them, it will be

then time for you to say to the God that made them, 'Why didst thou thus, and thus?' but not before."

The viscount paused for a moment, fixing an intense gaze upon the blue, starlit heaven, which might be seen through the window of the sick man's chamber, and to which he had pointed as he spoke.

"That would close all inquiry," said Monsieur de St. Medard at length.

"Not so," replied the abbé; "not so. You must first learn to believe in God before you can justly reverence him. All I seek is, to make you approach that inquiry with the humility and the awe that are becoming; not to start away at vague objections, but to see whether there be not sufficient proof that there is a God—proof irrefragable, demonstrable; and, having arrived at that point, your mind is too logical to reject the notion of his existence because you cannot comprehend the motives of his actions."

"Certainly, certainly," exclaimed the viscount: "once afford me a clear, satisfactory proof that there does exist a God, and to his governance of the world we must bow without inquiry. Give me a proof of his existence—that is all that I require."

"It is in every herb and every flower," replied the abbé; "in every fruit and every seed, in every being and in every thought, in every limb and feature, in every blood-vessel and every nerve, in every grain of sand and in the universe, in every part and in the whole! Search, search, my dear friend; go forth and search, and God will meet you everywhere. Whenever the heart of man demands in sincerity and truth, 'Where art thou, God?' the Almighty answers, 'Here!'"

"I do not exactly understand you," replied the viscount, "although I perceive that you mean to impress generally that God is to be traced in what you call his works. I see not how you will prove that all the phenomena that we behold are not attributable to any other self-existing cause. Why should I at all suppose that what is to-day was not yesterday? Or, if there has been a change, as we know there has, in society and other things, why should I not attribute that change to the ordinary operation of one material substance upon another? We know that motion is produced by substances in certain relations to each other, and with motion and matter the whole seems to me to require no other explanation. There is nothing observable in the whole world that cannot be referred to these two causes."

"Yes," replied the abbé; "there is the most important of all."

"And what is that?" demanded Monsieur de St. Medard.

"Design," answered his friend; "the adaptation of particular means to a particular end, which is observable in every part of the universe, but more especially in the highest classes of organised beings: which proves, beyond all possibility of doubt, the existence of an intellectual Agent proposing a particular object to be attained in the construction of a certain being, and arriving at that object by the most complex and wonderful machinery that it is possible to produce—machinery which shows in every part some of the attributes of God, his almighty power, his infinite wisdom, his unceasing love for the creatures that he forms. Design, my dear friend, design; that is the proof of the Godhead, which you cannot attribute to matter and motion."

The viscount remained in deep thought for several minutes, and at the end of that time he replied, "I will search, I will examine, my dear abbé. One should always hold one's mind open to conviction; and if I do find proofs of design, so conclusive as to convince me that the ordinary self-arrangement of matter in motion has not produced the effect, it will go far to make me believe there is a principle of some kind, which you, perhaps, may call God, and which imagination may invest with various attributes or qualities, though I, perhaps, may look upon that principle as an established geometrical law, without passions, feelings, sensations, but operating through all nature by fixed rules."

"I will never cavil at words," replied the abbé, "and I understand what you mean; though the very difficulty of expressing your views—nay, the impossibility of making them clear without a contradiction in terms—should in itself lead you to believe that in flying from some difficulties you plunge into still greater. You speak of a law: where was there ever a law without a law-maker? You talk of a law: who laid it down? You have no answer to either of these questions but that it was an inevitable necessity. Inevitable necessity does not design, does not adapt means to an end; and if you admit, as you must and will do, that there has been one great Creator of all things, you will soon see his attributes issuing as a natural consequence from his existence, and displayed in his works. You, who look upon intellect with such high and proud esteem, will not be long, after you have admitted the existence of a God, in admitting also that he must be the perfection of intellect; and that he, who raises you yourself above the brute by so many noble qualities, must possess in himself the acme and essence of all those gifts with which he has endowed you. But I have now gained my object: you have promised to search; you have promised me to examine. I require nothing more, unless it

be that you examine with humility, and remember how very little of the whole subject you can comprehend, although every man can comprehend fully enough to perceive that, whatever be the truth in regard to a thousand accessory circumstances, the grand doctrines of religion must be true. I speak as a dying man, my friend; as one who, in all probability, is about to part with you here for ever, but one who, nevertheless, hopes to meet with you in another world, where time, and doubt, and change will be at an end."

The viscount pressed his hand kindly, saying, "I will not continue the subject with you now, my friend, for in your zeal you have already somewhat exhausted yourself; and I, who unhappily entertain little hope of that meeting in another world, would fain enjoy your society a little longer in this. The surgeon, however, gives me good hope of you; and you must try all you can to live, abbé, in order that you may guide my researches; for it is a wide and trackless ocean that lies between this world and another, if there be such a thing, and the ignorant voyager much needs some one better instructed to give him a chart."

"It is indeed a wide ocean," said the abbé, "full of waves and dangers, storms and tempests; and, like the Atlantic before the adventurous Genoese first crossed it, no one comes back to tell us what is beyond. But as, to the eye of Columbus, enlightened by true genius, it was self-evident that, to harmonise with the known world in which he dwelt, there must be another continent beyond the wide western sea, so to the eye of a religious man, enlightened by revelation, it is self-evident that beyond the ocean of time there must be another world to equalize all that is unequal in this."

The figure that the abbé used, though an imperfect one, had fully as much effect upon Monsieur de St. Medard as all the rest of his reasoning; for so constituted is the mind of man that it with the greatest difficulty grasps abstractions, even when the most accustomed to their consideration; and an immense number of mistakes in metaphysical reasonings are to be traced to man's tendency to employ material facts, or the terms that represent them, as a sort of covert illustration of abstract ideas; for metaphysical science has not even yet an accurate technology.

However, the viscount once more repeated, "I will examine, my friend; and if I find that I have been mistaken, I will not scruple to own it; for, if it be a credit to any man to overcome the prejudices of others, it is a still greater credit to overcome his own. But now, my dear abbé, I will leave you, trusting most sincerely that you may be restored to health, and that I shall find you well at my return."

"Farewell!" replied the abbé: "it may be so; and if it be,

I trust that it will be for the purpose of seeing some fruit rise from the seed that has been sown this night."

Once more the viscount pressed his hand, with a faint smile at the good man's zeal, and left him.

CHAPTER XIII.

"As you please, my dear Francis; as you please," said Monsieur de St. Medard, with his foot upon the step of the carriage: "the fellow is undoubtedly a rogue."

"I know it," replied Francis de Langy; "but I think his roguery only goes to a certain extent, and a valet-de-chambre, my dear uncle——"

"Must have a certain quantity of roguery," said Monsieur de St. Medard, "as a hair-dresser must have a pot of pomatum; ha, Francis? Well, my dear boy, I leave it entirely to yourself: only, let him be perfectly cleared of this other business; let there not be the slightest doubt upon that score; and then, if, out of gratitude for the service he has rendered, you choose to take him as your personal attendant, do so. Some reward he must certainly have, but consider the matter well; and you have my full authority either to receive him as your valet, or to give him a hundred louis as his recompense."

"Perhaps," answered Francis de Langy, after a moment's thought—"perhaps the best plan will be to offer him his choice, whether he will take the hundred louis or the place."

"Oh! he will take the hundred louis," replied the viscount.

"Then I shall be the better satisfied not to give him the place," said Francis de Langy; "and it will be some sort of test of his character."

"But scarcely fair, I think," rejoined Monsieur de St. Medard: "you owe him a recompense of some kind, Francis; and now, though every office is venal in France under the government, it has not become so in gentlemen's houses, and we do not put up for sale to the best bidder a '*charge de valet-de-chambre auprès de Monsieur le Baron de St. Medard.*' So you must not count the place as worth a hundred louis."

"No, no," replied Francis de Langy; "I do not propose to do so, but merely to try him in that way, and give him whatever you think right as a recompense afterwards."

"Well, do so, do so," said the viscount; "but I think you will find that he will not hesitate."

"I do not know," answered his nephew, "he showed so much eagerness upon the subject; and——"

"And perhaps you think," rejoined Monsieur de St. Medard, "that he may calculate upon soon making up the hundred louis, by wages and perquisites, and *tours de panier*, &c. &c. However, Francis, I cannot stay now. The time is rapidly coming when you will have to act for yourself, and judge for yourself—the most difficult trade that man has to learn, and one to which he ought to serve an apprenticeship. Begin, therefore, at once, my dear boy, in this instance, and we shall see what will come of your first essay."

Thus saying, he entered the carriage; the postilions cracked their whips in the most approved and antique fashion; and Francis de Langy, re-entering the house, returned to his chamber, the family of Monsieur d'Artonne all courting the drowsy god a little longer than usual, after the fatigues which they had lately undergone.

The young man sat and mused; few sounds were heard in the house; he was left alone, and he felt that sensation of solitude in the world which we all experience when cast for the first time on our own resources. I say all, for I believe that every man feels it. However strong may be the buoyancy of his nature, however void the bright hopes of youth, however fortunate the circumstances in which he is placed, I do believe that each human being feels a sensation of loneliness when, after long dependence upon the guidance and direction of others, he is suddenly left to choose his own path and rule his own conduct. There is a certain degree of sadness in the impression, too; for it seems as if a faint foreshadowing came upon us of all the struggles and perplexities, the difficulties and the temptations, the disappointments, the rebuffs, the errors, and the faults of life. Often—indeed, very, very often—in the course of our existence, does the prophetic heart seize the favourable moment to array before us the things of the coming days, as if to prepare us for the battle which the spirit is ever destined to perform against its innumerable enemies on earth; and one of those moments seems to occur when, at our outset on the path of active exertion, we need most a warning voice to direct us in those first decisions, which are often most dangerous, and always most important.

A feeling of sadness, then, and of loneliness, came upon Francis de Langy when he found himself alone, left for the first time deprived of the guidance of the only one on whom he had relied through life, by Monsieur de St. Medard's absence, and of the counsels of the only one who could have supplied that friend's place, by the sickness of the Abbe Arnoux. He attributed this gloom, however, entirely to sorrow at being separated even for a time from his earliest and dearest friend; and his thoughts soon brightened when he

remembered that he was to stay with Julie d'Artonne. He felt, reader, what every man should feel when he asks his heart, "Do I love?" He felt that he could remain with her for ever; that she could console him for the absence of all others; that she was to him the world, and more than the world. He thought, too, that the time might come when he would be called upon to act for her as well as for himself; to protect, to guide, to direct her; and the manly spirit, which had quailed for a moment in the breast of youth under the consciousness of all life's obstacles, rose up again in power, and made his eye glisten and his chest expand.

Soon after he heard the sound of steps and persons speaking; and, descending from his room, he found Julie giving her father the morning greeting at the foot of the stairs.

"Well, Francis," cried the count, "how sped your request with your uncle?"

"Oh! as well as I could wish," replied Francis de Langy: "he leaves me to decide for myself, convinced that our good friend Jean Marais is a great rogue; but——"

"But leaving you to have a rogue about you, if you like it," interrupted Monsieur d'Artonne, "as a useful sort of commodity."

"No, not exactly," answered Francis de Langy: "what I was going to say is, he requires that this rogue should free himself distinctly and clearly of the crime with which he has been charged."

"Oh! that will be easily done," replied the count; "he is as much guilty as—as—as you are. You and I will ride over to Clermont after breakfast, and have him set free."

Francis de Langy had calculated upon passing the whole of a long day with Julie d'Artonne; and in the love of early youth, as the reader well knows, the society of the one we have chosen out of the world is like the lotus fruit—the more we taste, the more the fondness for it increases. He could not, however, well refuse the invitation of the count; and accordingly, as soon as breakfast was over, they set out. Though their conversation by the way was not an uninteresting one, and Francis de Langy fancied he perceived that Monsieur d'Artonne was not altogether blind to his growing attachment to Julie, from various words which were let fall from time to time, yet we must not pause upon what was said by either, but lead them on at once into the good old town.

As they mounted the steep hill and entered the first narrow streets, close, gloomy, and sad as they are, and always have been, one of those fits of dark thought fell upon Monsieur d'Artonne which we have before had occasion to notice.

Rousing himself, however, after a moment, he said, "I will ride on and speak to the intendant, Francis; by his means we shall get the matter the sooner over for the poor fellow. You go and find him out, and tell him what we are doing."

"Where is he?" demanded Francis de Langy; "I have lost sight of him since yesterday morning."

"He is in the prison, he is in the prison," replied Monsieur d'Artonne. "By my advice he went and surrendered himself.—Go with the baron," he continued, speaking to one of his servants, "and show him the lower prison."

Thus saying, the count rode on, and Francis de Langy was piloted by the servant to the smaller or lower prison, which I believe was swept away during the first French revolution.

At the time I speak of, the local authorities in France did very much what they liked as to the disposal of prisoners. Order, the great bond which binds all the divers parts of society together, was not in reality to be found much more than even in the times of anarchy which succeeded. Tranquillity, it is true, did exist, but there is a great difference between tranquillity and order; for though order is the only certain cause of complete and permanent tranquillity, yet tranquillity may be produced for a time by a thousand other circumstances. Weariness, apathy, weakness, may bring it about, but order ensures it. In all branches of the administration, in the execution of the laws, in the operations of the police, in all the relations between man and man, there was nothing like order, otherwise there would have been no revolution. The state of France exhibited a confused mass of conflicting privileges, unacknowledged rights, and indefinite notions, only held together by fragments of decayed institutions, and lying tranquil but as the grapes before they begin to ferment in the wine-vat, or as the elements when the storm is brooding in the sky. The want of order, and of definite and fixed rules of action, was shown in nothing more strongly than in the manner of dealing with prisoners before trial. The police might do anything, in short, that they liked with them; for, as is always the case in absolute monarchies, all inferior agents—especially at a distance from the centre of action—seized upon a portion of irresponsible power; and, where the king by his simple mandate could imprison any of his subjects in whatsoever dungeon he pleased without rendering an account to any man, his officers, of course, were without a lawful check as to their conduct towards those who fell into their power. In short, the police of France was then, as it always has been more or less, a diluted despotism, answerable to none but the crown. In one part of the country a prisoner was treated well, and often

wise magistrates had established a code of local regulations which, without the force of law, were acted upon as such. The prisoner was placed in a house of detention apart from convicted criminals, brought to trial as speedily as possible, and regarded as innocent till he was proved guilty. In others, however, to be accused was to be criminal, or at least to be treated as such; and brutal and unjustifiable arrests were frequently followed by the iniquity of long imprisonment, the degradation of an association with felons, and the gnawing misery of the dungeon.

The prison to which Jean Marais had now been sent was in the lower part of the town of Clermont, and was usually destined for the reception of notorious criminals and the most dangerous characters in the neighbourhood. Very often, however, persons perfectly innocent, or only advanced one or two steps in the career of vice, were plunged into the midst of the sea of crime and profligacy it contained; and sometimes they were detained there for weeks and months, breathing a pestiferous atmosphere, from which they very seldom escaped without imbibing more or less of the moral contagion. In such cases, the fact of their being placed there depended, not upon the nature of the charge against them, or of their own conduct under arrest, but upon the convenience of the police, or the good or bad will of some municipal officer. With Jean Marais, however, there was a pretext for treating him with some severity, in consequence of his previous evasion from confinement. He had, therefore, been sent, immediately on surrendering himself, to the lower prison, both as the most secure place of detention, and as some punishment for the trouble he had given. It was a gloomy-looking building; and as Francis de Langy approached it, he could not but shudder at the thought of all the misery, and sorrow, and guilt, which those walls must have witnessed. Nevertheless, with the great gate ajar behind them, two or three of the jailers stood laughing, and talking, and jesting, with as much indifferent gaiety as is displayed by an undertaker after he has conveyed some fellow-mortal to his last home. There seemed to be but little inquiry as to who went into the prison; for two women and a boy pushed open the gate and entered, while Francis de Langy was dismounting from his horse, without attracting the attention of the turnkeys even in the slightest degree. But a moment after, when the door again opened and some one came out, all three instantly turned round; and one, darting up to the man who was issuing forth, gazed closely in his face with keen and eager eyes, and did not suffer him to proceed till he had satisfied himself that he was none of those under his especial charge. No one would have impeded the

entrance of the young nobleman, but he thought it better to inquire by name for the person he came to seek; and he accordingly asked the man nearest to him if he could see a person called Jean Marais.

"You will find him in the court," replied the turnkey; and, seeming to take it for granted that every one must be as well acquainted with the intricacies of the prison as himself, he carried his civility no farther than merely to push the door open with his foot, in order to let the visiter enter.

The very first step produced a difficulty; for, after passing the gate, Francis de Langy found a passage on either hand, and another before him. He proceeded straight forward, however; and, meeting with a personage carrying a pipkin of soup, he asked him his way to the court.

"Oh, the cushion!" cried the man; "you've come up the wrong spout: you must go back and turn the clumsy, when the first pipe on the clever will lead you to it."

Hebrew would have been much more intelligible to Francis de Langy; and the man, perceiving his air of astonishment, added, "Ay, you're in the seed, I see; but you'll soon do better, and turn your colocynth to wiser purpose. I mean, go back again, turn up the passage to the left, and then the first to the right will lead you into the court."

He was an old, grey-cyed, malicious-looking man who spoke; and so keen, sneering, and coldly contemptuous was his whole manner, that Francis de Langy could scarcely help thinking that he was directing him wrong on purpose. It was not so, however; and the curl of his lip, and the sarcastic tone in which he answered, were only tokens of that scorn which every thorough-bred felon feels for the blessed inexperience and ignorance which he can never regain himself. The practised scoundrel always looks upon the virtuous as poor creatures, and supposes, or tries to suppose, that they only want the wit to be wicked.

Following his directions, the young gentleman soon issued out into a court where some twenty or thirty persons were gathered together, amusing themselves in various ways, and apparently enjoying themselves a good deal. There were no sombre looks, there was no air of despair, there was nothing of the dark and hideous aspect of imprisonment about them. Loud and uproarious laughter was ringing through the court; every group was grinning, chattering, talking, sporting; and if it had not been for the prison dress, the soiled and ragged coat, half-grey, half-black, which many of them wore, and the indescribable, but not-to-be-mistaken, expression of habitual vice which appeared in the countenances of the greater part of those there present, one might have supposed them a party met for merry-making. Everything upon the super-

ficies, in short, was not only cheerful, but gay: the misery was in the heart, and they kept it there. Too often, indeed, do we see it so in life. I recollect an old picture in which one had a sort of allegorical section of the earth, and what was below? The upper half showed a beautiful landscape, and gay groups dancing, with some of the follies and some of the faults of life; the lower half represented the grave and hell, with corruption, remorse, and punishment: and I never see reckless gaiety in a bad man without thinking of that picture, and asking myself, what is below?

The group in front of the prison-yard consisted of four or five men, sporting together with somewhat rude jocularities: one suddenly leaping over the head of another; his companion, again, tripping up his feet; a third, almost a giant in size and strength, lifting the least of the party from the ground by the waistband, and holding him out at arm's-length, as men hold out a lapdog; and all of them, though sometimes receiving a bruise or a cut, and swearing at each other with foul and blasphemous oaths, resuming the tone of sport the moment after, with as much good-humour as if they had never injured a fellow-being in their lives. A little farther on, a small monkey-faced man, perched upon an inverted pail, seemed holding forth to a large auditory with a great deal of extravagant gesticulation, but with the gravest and most solemn countenance possible, while all his hearers were rolling, convulsed with immoderate fits of laughter, and even a guard, who was standing near them on duty, was grinning from ear to ear. As Francis de Langy passed them by, he found that the mimic was preaching, as he called it, to his dear flock—parodying a sermon with a torrent of filth and blasphemy such as was never heard but in a similar place.

A number of other groups were scattered around; but the eye of the young gentleman at that moment fell upon one in the corner of the yard, consisting of three or four persons, whereof Jean Marais was one. Here, too, all was gaiety; and Jean seemed to be entertaining his hearers by some story, tully as much as the preacher was amusing his by the sermon. Two of his companions, however, deserve a brief description, and they shall have it. The first was a tall, athletic young man, probably not more than two or three-and-twenty, with a frank and open countenance, but a certain sort of daring and determined expression, which augured no great scruples in following out his own views and purposes. There was, indeed, a look of thought about his eye and brow, that was visible even through the laugh which he was bestowing upon Jean Marais' tale; and as he sat in the shade with his hat on his knee, twisting round and round some eagle's feathers which were stuck in the front of it,

Francis de Langy fancied that his mind would fain have wandered away to other things, if it had not been for the sort of conventional indifference which men in his situation believe themselves bound to assume.

He was not dressed in the prison garb; but another, who was seated by him, displayed that indication of some serious offence. He was not so tall as the other by nearly three inches, but was gigantic in depth of chest and breadth of shoulders. His countenance, which was somewhat pale, with a dark bluish beard, wore a gay and good-humoured expression, without the slightest trace of care or anxiety. He laughed loud and merrily; and the only thing which could show that the mind was not in a state of perfectly placid repose, ready to submit itself implicitly to any pleasant impression that might offer, was the wandering glance of the keen dark eye, which seemed continually searching for something that it did not find. The face of Jean Marais was turned obliquely from Francis de Langy, so that the worthy valet-de-chambre did not see the young gentleman approaching; and he went on with his narrative in the same loud tone he had been using, in order to rise above all the multitudinous sounds with which the court of the prison was ringing. The ear of his visiter thus caught several sentences, and Francis was not a little pleased to find that in his conversation there was none of the profane and ribald licentiousness which he had just heard poured forth from the mouth of the man who was preaching. Jean Marais was relating his own adventures in the house of Madame de Bausse; and the picture he gave of that good lady herself, her frivolity, her malice, her affectation, was so clever and so droll as to compel an unwilling smile upon the lips of his unperceived auditor. The subject at that moment was the marchioness's first anxiety at the prolonged absence of her son; and Jean Marais mocked her tone, her words, and her looks, as he described her calling up all the men-servants, one after another, to communicate her apprehensions to them; hinting, moreover, that her vanity was not insensible to the admiration of the lowest footboy in her household. He took off, too, her whole demeanour: he wriggled, he heaved, he panted, he rolled his eyes about, he sighed, he fluttered, and laying his hand upon his left side, he exclaimed, in the shrill treble of mock sensibility, "Ah, my poor heart!" Then, starting up, he prepared to tear his hair; but, suddenly perceiving the young gentleman standing near, he stopped, crying, "Ah! Monsieur le Baron, you have awakened me from a delicious dream. I was just then Madame de Bausse, enjoying the excitement of her son's disappearance."

Francis de Langy now took him aside, and gave him the

information he had been sent to communicate, at which Jean Marais seemed not a little pleased, saying, "I shall be glad enough to get out, for we have not the best school of morals here, sir, and my virtue is of a somewhat delicate constitution. Yet, after all," he added, "I am not sorry I came in again, seeing that I met with that poor lad, who sits there with his hat in his hand, and who wants a little comfort and consolation. I wish, sir, you could speak to the Count d'Artonne about him."

"Who is he?" demanded Francis de Langy, eyeing the man with the eagle's feathers in his hat; "who is he, and how came he in here?"

Jean Marais drew him a little farther away, and then replied, "He is a poor devil who has been brought in for poaching—upon the count's lands, too. I am very much afraid he's guilty; in fact, he does not deny it."

"That is a serious offence," said Francis de Langy, who naturally entertained the prejudices of his class and his times in regard to the rights of the chase, any infringement of which was at that time regarded in France as a crime nearly equal to murder, and certainly very much deeper than the breach of some commandments in the decalogue.

"It is indeed, sir," replied Jean Marais; "and yet it is a wonderfully tempting thing to see a nice, soft grey roebuck within forty or fifty yards of the muzzle of your gun. However, this lad has a better excuse; and I am sure, if he did not peach, I don't see what he was to do."

"How so?" demanded Francis de Langy. "What excuse has he to allege?"

"Why, in the first place, sir," replied Jean Marais, "you know there are certain provinces in France where every one has the right of killing and eating whatever wild animals he likes, and this young man came from one of those. In the next place, you see, poor devil! there was nothing else for him to do. He and the rest of his people, some two years ago, took a little farm belonging to Monsieur d'Artonne, up amongst the hills; but, being Huguenots, the people around, who were all Catholics, would have nothing to say to them. They are in a state of complete excommunication, though they are as good souls as ever lived. Late in the spring, and during the summer, there is plenty of work upon the farm; but during a great part of autumn, all winter, and two-thirds of the spring, there is nothing to do in that country but to walk about the hills and woods with a gun. He kept himself to bears, and wolves, and other beasts of prey, for a long time; but it is hard to refrain a shot at a buck or a doe, a hare, or a wild boar, especially when a man's hungry and is fond of venison."

"It is," said Francis de Langy, "and I will speak to Monsieur d'Artonne about him. I should think he is not inclined to deal harshly with any one. Was he apprehended by the count's people?"

"No, sir," answered Jean Marais: "he was apprehended by the maréchaussée. They caught him with a roe over his shoulders, and took him in the fact. It was on a part of the count's ground so far distant from the château that Monsieur d'Artonne takes no pains with the game upon it."

"I will speak to him, I will speak to him," said Francis de Langy; "and, if he has any power, I doubt not he will have him set free. Who is that other man with whom you were talking just now? He has not the air of an Auvergnat."

"Oh, *pardie*, no!" replied Jean Marais: "he is from the north—one of the *écorcheurs* you may have heard of—a *brave garçon*, nevertheless."

Francis de Langy heard him with some surprise; for, perhaps, amongst all the blood-thirsty ruffians that Europe has produced, there never was a race so remorseless and sanguinary as the *écorcheurs* of France in the eighteenth century. "I should suppose," he said, with a grave and displeased expression of countenance, "that there was nothing good to be found in such a man, and no advantage in his companionship."

Jean Marais smiled. "Not much, perhaps, sir," he answered; "but when I am put in a place like this I am obliged to choose the best society it affords; and the prison of Clermont, sir, is not the saloon of Versailles, or even the *salle-à-manger* of the Café Regnard."

"But you do not mean to say," said Francis de Langy, "that he is amongst the best you could have found here?"

"In good truth I do, sir," replied Jean Marais. "The men with whom I was talking are the three most respectable people in the place. We four are the only part of the congregation who do not talk blasphemy and obscenity from morning till night, which is none the wittier in my ears because it is wrapped in *argot*.* Now, we four have amused ourselves by telling our histories in good plain French, laughing a little at our betters, perhaps, but saying nothing here which we should be ashamed to say in any other place, though some of us might not like, indeed, to make such full confessions.* As to the *écorcheur*, he is one of the best-born and best-educated amongst us—the son of a great farmer in Picardy, who bred him up to the trade he followed, and taught him to cultivate the fields by day, and to rob houses and passengers by night. All we Frenchmen have very little care for human life; we don't much mind losing our

* Otherwise *slang*.

own or taking that of another; and Jacques Braye assured me, not an hour ago, that he never thought there was any great harm in what he was doing, till his father was broken on the wheel about three months ago, and he himself escaped with difficulty into Auvergne. He then began to fancy that it was not quite right, after all, to take men's money, and perhaps their lives, too, though the only thing he had ever objected to before was, when his father once broiled an old Jew alive, in order to make him confess where he had hidden his money. It is very shocking, sir, I acknowledge; but yet, if you will compare him with the other men in the place, you will find him one of the honestest persons in it. I will answer for it, that, except the four who were sitting in the corner there together, there is not a man who repents of anything he has done in the past, or proposes anything for the future but to be revenged upon society by some new crime as soon as he can get out. Now, poor Jacques Braye does repent very heartily, though he'll be broken on the wheel within a fortnight from this time if they bring him to trial. But, at all events, I can assure you, sir, that a man who has committed even a very great crime, but has not long-confirmed habits of vice, is a less dangerous companion than one who has worn away every good feeling as well as good principle in the practice of small delinquencies, and is only prevented from doing something worse by fear or caution."

Francis de Langy thought there might be some truth in Jean Marais' observation; but before he could reply, his companion gave him a hint that it would be better to get out of the court as fast as possible.

"That old, foul-mouthed Esorve," he said in a whisper, "has had his eye upon you for the last minute, and he is now whispering with some of his companions. I know what it means very well, and in another instant you will be stripped of everything that is worth having upon you."

While he spoke, Francis de Langy moved towards the door, and luckily at the same moment the guard crossed over towards them; for there was a sudden movement amongst the prisoners in that direction, which showed that their operations were about to commence. A howl of mortification and derision met the young gentleman's ear as he entered the passage leading from the court; and with not a little satisfaction he quitted the den of thieves in which his future valet had been placed for the completion of his education.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE most corrupt invention of the corrupt race to which we belong—and we certainly did for many generations go on

from one stage of moral putridity to another—was devised in France. It was neither more nor less than the venality of the offices of justice. All posts, in fact, were venal during several centuries in that country; and, although one might have expected that common sense and common honesty would have preserved the magistracy from such a taint, alas! it was not so; and those who were destined to administer the law amongst their fellow-subjects purchased their offices as they would have purchased a farm. Now, if a man chooses to buy the right of being shot at, and wearing a red or a blue coat, either by land or sea, there can be no great harm in letting him do so, especially where his appointment to any important command depends upon persons responsible for their conduct; but to sell the office of a judge is only in other terms to sell justice, and we may be very sure that the article will be adulterated before it comes to the general market.

The intendants of justice, police, and finance, as they were called, were personages sent from Paris into the various provinces of France to preside over certain districts, with a curious, somewhat indefinite, and very extensive power. They were generally chosen from amongst the *Maitres de Requêtes*, and were but too frequently subjected to any other influence than that of Themis. Corruption, as a machine, does not, indeed, always work so ill as men may imagine; and though at first sight one would suppose that a system in which an officer, purchasing his post at an enormous sum, and very often obtaining leave to perjure it only through the interest of a harlot, was sent down to dispense justice in a large district, must necessarily soon come to a stop by the general abhorrence, disgust, indignation, and revulsion of those upon whom he exercised his function, yet the thing went on for many years, and men were found—ay, men of gravity, station, and wisdom—to say of this, as of more than one iniquity in our own country, “It works well.”

Little less than kings in their own particular province, the intendants lived sumptuously, dined luxuriously, and had magnificent houses; and into the saloon of one of those dwellings, in the town of Clermont, we shall introduce the reader, in order that he may see and hear Monsieur d’Artonne and the intendant of that generality chatting over the events which brought the former thither. Nothing could be more exquisite and luxurious than the furniture of the apartment. Every article had been brought from Paris, and an artist of celebrity had come from the capital for the express purpose of painting and gilding the panels of the wainscot. It was not difficult, in short, to fancy one’s self in one of the royal chambers at Versailles; and as Monsieur d’Artonne looked around him when first ushered into the saloon, which was

then vacant, he could not help asking himself, "How is all this splendour obtained?"

In a moment or two after, the intendant himself appeared. He was a man of about forty-five; thin, but well-formed; with keen black eyes, an atrabilious complexion, and raven hair without a single thread of silver mingling with it. His manner was calm and mild, but impressive; his step was noiseless, but firm; his voice was sweet in tone, but very penetrating; his words were well chosen, but studiously indefinite. One was convinced that he was a man of great abilities, yet knew not why; one was pleased with his demeanour, yet felt that he was unapproachable. There was nothing repellent, indeed: you might see him, you might question him, you might argue with him, without any fear of a rebuff; but you would discover nothing more than the outside. He was like some object encased in crystal, which you may handle and look at for ever without being able to touch. On the present occasion he was dressed, as usual, with the most scrupulous neatness, but all in black. He was a man full of proprieties, and would not for the world have appeared either in a garb of a gay and glittering character, or in one in the least degree discomposed or inferior to his station. His coat was of the richest and most expensive velvet fitting his person beautifully, without ply or wrinkle. His black silk stockings were the finest that could be made for money; his buttons were of jet, with a small diamond in the centre of each. The very hilt and hangers of his sword were of the same grave hue, but exquisite in their workmanship; and it was clear that he looked upon his functions as too important and solemn not to require a dress and demeanour perfectly harmonizing therewith.

Approaching the count with quick but easy and regular steps, he made him a low and ceremonious bow; then took his hand, and assured him, with a face which expressed fully as much pleasure as if it had been sparkling with smiles, that he was delighted to see him, and Monsieur d'Artonne had every reason to think that it was so; for the intendant, ever since that officer had come down to Clermont, now somewhere about a year and a half, had shown him the most marked respect and attention. Indeed, nobody in the whole surrounding country had received such testimonies of distinguished regard; and, to say the truth, as the count was unaware of any power to serve or please that great personage, his civilities seemed somewhat extraordinary to the object thereof.

We may as well let the reader into a part of the secret, however. The intendant, on being despatched to that district by the king, had made accurate and scrupulous inquiries

as to the fortune, character, and family of every gentleman in the vicinity. He had found that the count possessed large property, that he was a man very generally loved and respected throughout the neighbourhood, that he was not easily swayed by passions or prejudices of any kind, and that he had an only daughter, who was almost certain of being the heiress of very extensive estates. Now, the intendant might well calculate that, by some one or other of these qualities, the friendship of Monsieur d'Artonne might in future be very serviceable to him. His mind rested with complacence upon the idea of being son-in-law to his noble friend, receiving a rich dower with the count's daughter, and allying himself to an old and distinguished family. Monsieur d'Artonne's countenance and support, too, in the execution of his functions, might be of no small value; and, at all events, pleasant society and friendly intercourse with people in high station were things very desirable in the eyes of one who himself had risen from a family not of the most elevated class; for at that period there were many grades in the French nobility, and some difficulty in stepping from the one to the other.

It must not be supposed that he had laid any definite plan for seeking the hand of Julie d'Artonne. He very well knew that under existing circumstances such a thing would not be listened to for a moment; but, to use a not very elegant but an expressive form of speech, he always considered what was upon the cards. Thus there was probably no one in the province who had more influence with him than the count.

After various ceremonial greetings, such as the customs of the day required, Monsieur d'Artonne opened the business which brought him there by saying, "I come to speak with you, Monsieur l'Intendant, upon the case of a poor man who has been charged by Madame de Bausse with the commission of a crime, upon apparently the most frivolous and absurd motives. Not being very fond of a prison, and somewhat impatient of the law's delay, he made his escape—most fortunately for me, I must say; for he was accidentally the means, during our late tour, of saving my daughter's life. By my advice he surrendered himself yesterday; and I come to request that you would cause him to be examined yourself, would look into the nature of the charge against him, and see whether there is sufficient cause for detaining him in prison any longer. If I could prevail upon you personally to investigate the matter, I should, I confess, be much gratified; for one cannot expect either such discrimination or such decision from inferior officers as from a gentleman of ~~his~~ your eminence and authority."

The intendant heard him to an end without any reply, and by the movement of a muscle. With the greater part

of the world, men are constantly making some sort of answer, false or true, as the case may be, while another is speaking to them, either by some interjected words, some gesture, or some change of countenance; but every now and then we find an individual who possesses from nature, or has acquired by art, a screen impenetrable to all eyes, by which he shrouds his thoughts from those the most anxious to discover them. The face of the intendant was one of these screens: he listened to whatever was said to him, gravely, attentively, but without the slightest variation of look. His eyes did not even wink; and whether the subject was grave or gay, pathetic or risible, all remained still. One would have thought he was a man destitute of all emotions.

As soon as Monsieur d'Artonne, however, had concluded, he replied, "It gives me the greatest satisfaction, my dear count, to hear any wish of yours, for to hear is but to satisfy. I will have the man brought before me immediately. Madame de Bausse is now in the town, for I saw her carriage pass some ten minutes ago. She shall be sent for, too, and the matter shall be instantly investigated. She is, I understand, in sad distress, poor lady! at the disappearance of her son; and you, I think, my dear count, must be somewhat deeply affected by this affair, if report speaks true that an alliance was in contemplation ——"

"Report does not speak true, Monsieur l'Intendant," exclaimed the Count d'Artonne, interrupting him with some vehemence. "In disposing of the hand of my daughter, I shall be guided but by one consideration—virtue, honour, and high qualities. I need not tell you that Monsieur de Bausse possessed none of these."

The intendant had quite good enough an opinion of himself to imagine that he had a fair chance, and of course his prepossessions in favour of Monsieur d'Artonne increased rather than diminished. His countenance, however, retained its impassibility; no one could have told that the count was not describing to him the building of a cow-house, so gravely indifferent was his face; and his only reply was, "We had better, perhaps, proceed with the business immediately."

Some attendants were summoned by the tinkling of a small silver bell which stood upon the table, and an order in due form was sent to the lower prison for bringing Jean Marais to the intendant's house. A messenger was then despatched to seek Madame de Bausse through the town of Clermont; after which the high officer and his guest sat chatting over the news of the day. Scarcely had five minutes elapsed, however, when the doors of the saloon were thrown open, and the Bishop of Clermont was announced; which, perhaps, was not satisfactory to the Count d'Artonne, the

prelate being the brother of Madame de Bausse, and one very likely to adopt and support her views; not from any conviction that they were right, but from a tender regard for certain good things which the fair marquise had at her disposal.

We shall not have much to do, dear reader, with the estimable Bishop of Clermont; but, having an infinite horror of all those capricious rules and regulations by which ancient critics endeavoured to tie men down and to prevent them from following the course of the great teacher Nature, I shall take the liberty of giving a full-length portrait of a personage, who had, it is true, no great influence upon the fate of our principal characters, but whose class—a class luckily now nearly extinct—had a very great influence indeed upon the whole world, both in political and religious matters. In doing this, I repeat, I do but follow Nature; for how often is it in the march of life that a personage suddenly appears before us, strongly engaging our attention, remarkable in every respect, worthy of philosophical contemplation, and occupying the whole of our thoughts and attention for a short period, but then passing away immediately from our eyes, never being seen again, and affecting us in no other manner than by that moral influence which is exercised upon each human creature by the characters of those with whom his mind is brought in contact, either as a subject of their operation or an active agent himself!

The Bishop of Clermont was a man of good family, some five years older than Madame de Bausse. He was now the head of the house, his elder brother having died childless, but not until he himself had entered the church and obtained considerable preferment therein. His family was poor in relation to their station in society; and, consequently, even after he had succeeded to his brother's estates, he experienced no regret at having embraced a profession in which celibacy was obligatory. At first, as a young man, he had felt very little disposed to become an ecclesiastic; for his character was worldly, his passions were strong, his taste for pleasure was acute; and he would have resisted, had it been according to the usages of his country and his times for the son of a noble family to show any choice in regard to the pursuits which lay before him. He had thought it very hard, while at the seminary where he was brought up, to forswear those indulgences for which he felt a strong propensity at an early age; but, very soon after he had received the tonsure, he made a world of discoveries in regard to the facilities of clerical life, which taught him to laugh at his former objections, by showing him that his pleasures only obtained an extended sphere by the gown that hid them.

As soon as this perception came upon him, he set himself to consider how he might best, in the circumstances which surrounded him, enjoy life and prolong its enjoyment; and, being of a shrewd, keen, and unscrupulous character, he speedily saw that the path had been clearly marked out by personages of his own views and inclinations, so that he had nothing to do but to follow upon a very beaten track. Decency was the first thing to be attended to; and accordingly, though a somewhat zealous director of fair penitents, he contrived to avoid scandal. The inconvenient rules and regulations which abridged the pleasures of the table were without difficulty evaded by any ecclesiastic who knew how to make a friend of his cook, so that public abstemiousness was fairly compensated by private indulgence. A number of other little sins, very pleasant to deal with, found a convenient cloak in the robe of the church: grasping avarice might allege charity as its excuse, and the hand that swept up louis-d'ors might cleanse itself by the distribution of livres, the daily alms covering the daily exactions. Pride, too, might be quietly gratified by sinking the man in the ecclesiastic; and the honour of religion and the church might be the watchword, when the real object was that for which angels fell.

He comprehended the whole scheme at once, and acted upon it with great skill; taking care, as the very first point of the plan, to smooth down all asperities, and to dress up each of his passions in a garb the most opposite to that which it wore with other men. Slander and malice were unknown to the good bishop, but sometimes they took the form of paternal reproof, sometimes that of benign unguardedness; with a smiling and placid countenance he would let drop a word that rankled for years; he would disseminate a calumny with an expression of disbelief. He would inquire into the most indecent particulars, and regale his imagination with prurient images, from zeal for the purity of his flock; and he would encourage the licentious jest by a tone of gentleness in his reproof. When it was necessary to persecute and to destroy, the spirit of religious fervour would seize him; and when he wished to favour and indulge, Christian charity and moderation were upon his lips.

Nature, however, has always provided herself with tell-tales; and the hypocrite has generally physical witnesses against him which are difficult to silence. Thus, our *Tartuffe* was "*gros et gras, et se portoit à merveille.*" See him, dear reader! see him as he enters the saloon of the intendant, with that slow, calm, and dignified step, stout and overflowing with animal health, somewhat corpulent, but not greatly so; his rosy countenance close-shaved and smooth,

his fat and luscious lips bearing a pleasant smile, his watery and erotic eyes possessing that peculiar fatness which the inspired writers have pointed out as the characteristic mark of the licentious! Look at the well-furnished double-chin hanging upon his smooth-plaited band; and mark those large animal ears that rise on either side of his *calotte*! Do not overlook, either, the large, rounded, weighty calf of his leg, and the fine small ankle, before he drops his robe over it, as soon as he finds that there are no women in the room; and consider well the graceful benignity with which he salutes the intendant, and the brotherly love with which he embraces his dear cousin D'Artonne! Oh! he is a worthy pillar of the church, a noble preacher of a religion of abstinence and self-denial, a proper follower of the meekest and mildest of men!

Hark, too, how he declares to the count that the pleasure of his visit to the intendant is doubled by the unexpected satisfaction of finding *him* there! It is true that his eyes were fixed upon the door of the house, from one of the windows of the episcopal residence, at the very moment that Monsieur d'Artonne dismounted from his horse; it is true that the servants of that gentleman, each of whom he well knew, were then standing in the square; it is true Madame de Bausse was at that precise time in his own oratory, had remarked the count's visit to the intendant, and had wondered aloud what he could want there. But, of course, wrapped in heavenly musing, the bishop had neither seen nor heard, and was quite taken by surprise at finding his cousin in the saloon.

Monsieur d'Artonne understood him as well, perhaps, as one man can understand another; and, therefore, from the worthy bishop's asserting that he was surprised, the count was naturally led to conclude that he came thither for the purpose of seeing what he was doing. His reception of the prelate's gratulations was certainly somewhat cold—perhaps a little embarrassed. It is not always, indeed, easy to know how to deal with a disingenuous man; but the intendant saved Monsieur d'Artonne any explanations with the bishop, by inquiring, after a few brief words, if he could tell where Madame de Bausse was to be found in the town, and stating the business they were about to proceed with.

"I left her at the *évêché*," replied the bishop; "I will see in a minute if she be still there:" and without waiting to give ear to the intendant's entreaties that he would not take the trouble, and offers to send over a messenger to the marquise immediately, the bishop walked out of the room, bowing, with a thousand smiles, and saying that he would be back again without delay. A considerable time, however, elapsed

without his making his appearance; and before the prelate had returned it was announced to the intendant that the prisoner, Jean Marais, had been brought up, according to his directions. An order was given to keep him below for a few minutes longer; and at length the folding-doors were again thrown open, and Madame de Bausse entered, leaning on her brother's arm. She was the picture of a faded coquette: her dress, which was not of mourning, for she had not yet given up the hope of seeing her son return, was in the height of the Parisian fashion, and might have become a girl of eighteen or twenty; nor had anything been omitted that art could do to lighten the load of years, at least in appearance. She was at least forty years of age; and, as her spirit was not the most quiet and gentle, those forty years had wrought more serious ravages than is usually the case; but still, what between assistance from the perruquier and abundant but judicious dispensation of rouge and other pigments, padded additions to various parts of her person, shadings of lacc, and ornaments of silk, Madame de Bausse might very well pass for thirty-five at the utmost, and usually called herself thirty-three; leaving in a sort of misty indistinctness the fact that she had a son whose twentieth birthday would return no more, and not attempting to explain the phenomenon. She did indeed usually term the young gentleman her boy; but, if his follies were those of extreme youth, his vices smacked strongly of manhood.

On the present occasion she was fluttered and agitated. Her shrewish black eyes sparkled, her thick silk petticoat rustled, and her lip quivered; so that, although she bore a smile upon her countenance, having been exhorted to moderation by her brother as they came, the expression was sour and petulant, and she evidently met Monsieur d'Artonne with not the most placable feelings, seeming to entertain no great gratitude towards him for interfering on behalf of poor Jean Marais. The face and manner of the count as he met her were peculiarly grave and serious, so that she could not accuse him of regarding the painful apprehensions which she entertained in respect to the fate of her son with anything like levity; but yet she displayed, in their very first salutation a degree of irritability which somewhat embarrassed him.

Having greeted her kindly, and inquired into her health, receiving but a peevish answer, the count, as if for the purpose of doing something—which as the reader well knows, is not very easy under all circumstances, stretched forth his hand to pat the head of a large dog which had followed her into the room, calling the animal by its name, as if familiar with it. The dog, however, seeming to take his tone from

his mistress, instantly growled and flew at him, and was only driven off by a severe kick, and the interference of the servants, who were closing the doors of the saloon.

"Ah!" exclaimed Madame de Bausse, with a bitter smile; "poor Noble knows very well that you were never a friend of his master, cousin D'Artonne, and that you have come here now to protect his murderer."

The count started, with an angry and indignant look. "I come here for no such thing, Henriette," he replied: "even you yourself are not convinced that any murder has been committed at all; and, if the slightest cause could be shown for supposing the man guilty, I should be the first to require that he be proceeded against in a regular manner; but, from all that I have heard, I do not believe that such is the case. He saved my daughter's life, as I wrote to you some days ago; and all I desire is, that Monsieur l'Intendant may examine into the affair at once, in order that the poor fellow may not be kept in prison, which is in itself sufficient punishment for a great crime."

"Ay!" cried Madame de Bausse, "you think a great deal about your daughter, but nothing about my son; and, as for the rest of the matter, I say this man ought to be kept in prison till we can find out who did murder him and who did not."

"Such will be the course, madam," said the intendant, in his calm, grave manner, "if there is just cause of suspicion against the prisoner. All that the count requires is immediate investigation, and that I feel I have no right to refuse. The inquiry shall be carried on in your presence, and I doubt not that you will be satisfied with the result."

"I think my word might be sufficient," replied Madame de Bausse. "I am not supposed to be a person—an I, Monsieur l'Intendant, to accuse a man wrongfully?"

"Certainly not, madam," answered the intendant; "and it must be very satisfactory to you to have an opportunity of stating the motives of your accusation fully and immediately."

"True, my son," said the bishop; "but you must recollect that this lady may have strong moral causes of suspicion, which do not amount to absolute proofs; she may wish to have time to investigate and develop fully the evidence against this man, without making indiscreet revelations, which might perhaps tend to frustrate the ends of justice."

"The police," replied the intendant, "are the persons best fitted by habit, as well as entitled by law, to carry on such an inquiry; and in stating the cause of her suspicions to me, Madame de Bausse will put the matter in train for arriving at a just result. She may do so if she pleases, be-

fore the man is brought up, and I will give all due weight to the facts she adduces. Pray be seated, madam, and inform me whether you have discovered anything more than is stated in the first *procès verbal* upon which the prisoner was arrested. I have read the papers, and find it therein recited, that, on the day of the supposed murder, he was absent from the house for two hours; and that a spot of blood, or something like blood, was found upon the breast of his shirt. These, I think, are the only facts from which we can infer a suspicion."

"And quive enough too, I should think," exclaimed Madame de Bausse.

"When joined with the unaccountable absence of his master," added the bishop, "the certainty that they went out in the same direction together, the knowledge which we have that all the other servants were in the house, and the fact of my poor nephew having reprov'd this very person severely on the preceding night, receiving, we understand, a very insolent and threatening reply. Far be it from me, however, to insinuate that he may not be able to prove his innocence, or that my good cousin D'Artonne suffers *himself* to be moved by even the pure spirit of gratitude to *favour* a base assassin, because that man saved his daughter's life. It has been currently reported, it is true, that the count had always a dislike to my poor nephew; that he said at various times very harsh things of him; that he magnified any juvenile follies, and depreciated his many good qualities and virtues; but I do not believe a word of it. I believe that the count may have been actuated solely, in any severity he showed towards my nephew, by high notions of the necessity of restraining and reprov'g youth; and I do not give the slightest credit, I assure you, to one-half of the anecdotes that are told of Monsieur d'Artonne's intemperate expressions regarding the poor boy."

The prelate might have spared his malignant eloquence: it was pouring water upon a rock, as far as the intendant was concerned. That officer heard him tranquilly to the end, without the slightest appearance of interest, and then returned to the point. "The chain of facts," he said, "is important and unless they can be accounted for, or at least some of them, may afford grounds for such suspicion as to justify the detention of this man; but, as they are all points susceptible of explanation, it is right that we should hear what he has to say upon the subject. If he refuses, or is incapable of giving such explanation, the case will be very much aggravated; and, on the contrary, if his account of all these transactions be satisfactory, the suspicions themselves vanish:

therefore, my lord, we have the strongest motive for inquiring into the matter immediately."

As he spoke, he rang his bell and ordered Jean Marais to be brought in. The first act of the intendant, when the prisoner appeared between two archers, was to gaze at him fixedly for a moment or two with keen, considering eyes, in a manner which might have abashed many a very innocent man. Jean Marais, however, was not a person very easily abashed, and he underwent the scrutiny with the most perfect composure, waiting till the intendant had taken a full survey of his features and person before he made the slightest movement, and then merely bowing to Madame de Bausse with a placable smile, as he said, "*Bon jour, madame!*" in a tone which certainly implied no malice.

"Ah! don't speak to me, you wretch!" exclaimed the marquise; "I abhor you! Noble, come hither; don't go near him!" But the dog, without attending to her commands, walked up familiarly to Jean Marais, and put its broad nose into his hand.

"Jean Marais, attend!" said the intendant. "You were absent from the house of the Marquise de Bausse for two hours on the seventh day of the present month. Where were you during that time, and what were you doing?"

"I walked into Clermont," replied Jean Marais, without the slightest hesitation; "I went along the bank of the river till I came to the path through the fields, by which I proceeded to Clermont. I met fat Peter Beuvron, and I said to him, '*Bon jour, gros papa!*' to which he replied, '*Bon jour, qanache!*'"

"The walk took you half-an-hour," said the intendant; "what then?"

"Not quite half-an-hour," answered Jean Marais: "I go fast, sir, when I put my feet to the ground. But what I did next was, to take my master's hat to have a new feather-band, according to his orders. I gave it to Martin Grange, the hatter; that was the business which took me to Clermont, and he can tell whether I was with him or not."

"That did not occupy much time," said the intendant. "What did you do next, my good friend? You will still have nearly an hour to account for by your own statement."

Jean Marais paused for a moment, and the eyes of Madame de Bausse glistened at what she thought his hesitation, while the bishop sat with his two hands on his broad knees, and stared in the poor fellow's face with an intensity that had something of triumph in it.

"Well!" continued the intendant, after waiting an instant.

"Well, sir," replied Jean Marais, "if the truth must be told in this reverend society, I spent the missing hour with

Jeannette Cottille, the little *couturière*, whom madame knows, for she makes her gowns for her, and puts in the pads about the breast and shoulders."

Madame de Bausse looked spears and lances at him, but Jean Marais himself was as grave as a judge, and the intendant also. A sly smile, however, stole over the round rosy face of the bishop; and he gave a sidelong glance to Monsieur d'Artonne, who looked down and played with the fringe of his sword-belt.

"Will Jeannette Cottille swear that you spent an hour with her on that day?" demanded the intendant.

"I really don't know, sir," replied Jean Marais: "it depends upon whether she is in a humour for telling the truth."

"And when you left her," continued his interrogator, "what did you do then?"

"I walked back again," answered Jean Marais.

"Did you not quarrel with your master the night before?" demanded the intendant.

"No, sir," replied the prisoner; "but he quarrelled with me."

"Give your own account of what occurred on that occasion," said the officer.

"Oh! of course he will tell a fine string of lies!" exclaimed Madame de Bausse.

"No, I will not, indeed, madam," rejoined Jean Marais: "merely out of policy, I will tell the whole truth; for falsehood, in a dangerous case such as mine, is like paint upon an old woman, soon found out, and making that which it rests upon look all the uglier. I did not tie Monsieur de Bausse's cravat to his taste, and he vowed I did it on purpose. I assured him I did not, and we tried it again, but it was worse than before; and then he got very angry, and struck me on the face, which made my nose bleed; so then I told him that I was a servant, but not a slave, and that I would not remain with him."

"'Tis all false together!" cried Madame de Bausse, her eyes flaming and her cheeks red. "I knew he would manufacture a lie; but, if his mere word is to be believed, there is no use of any inquiry at all. It is all false together, Monsieur l'Intendant."

"It seems very like it, indeed, madam," said the intendant, in his usual tone. "It is scarcely possible to believe that the Marquis de Bausse should so forget himself to a servant; and, if the servant made him such a reply, why did he not send him away directly?"

"Because I knew too many of his secrets," answered Jean Marais, in an indifferent tone; "and, as for this part of the

story, I related every word of it the same night to Morris, the lacquey. He is now in the town with madame's carriage, for I saw him as I came along from the prison. You can send for him and inquire; he will tell you the same tale."

"If he does, I will discharge him that minute!" exclaimed Madame de Bausse.

The intendant looked at her, but said nothing. The expression of his countenance could scarcely be said to change, so slight was the difference; and yet it was easy to see that he thought the lady a great fool.

"I find it asserted here," he continued, addressing Jean Marais after a momentary pause, "that you and Monsieur de Bausse left the château together, and took the same road. Where did you part from him?"

"At the end of the avenue," replied Jean Marais. "He stopped to speak with Allard, the farmer, and they walked away together on the Riom road, while I went on my way to Clermont."

At this moment the bishop, who had been conversing in a low voice with Madame de Bausse, rose, as if to take his leave, saying, "As I think that this matter is very likely to affect the man's life, Monsieur l'Intendant, it does not become me, as a bishop of a church of mercy, to take any further part in the proceedings."

"Stop one moment, Monsieur de Clermont," replied the intendant. "Take away the prisoner, archers, and keep him below for a little. One of you go to the carriage of Madame de Bausse, and bring hither the lacquey named Morris, not suffering him to interchange a word with any one by the way. Let another be sent for Jeannette Cottille, the *couturière*; and mind——"

"I really must take my leave," said the bishop; "my time is growing short. I have duties to perform, my son."

"So have I, reverend sir," replied the intendant, holding him by the edge of the robe; "but I really must detain you for one minute.—Do as I command you," he continued, addressing the archers, who had lingered as if in doubt. "I really must detain you for one minute, to perform an act well becoming your sacred character, which is, to persuade your fair sister not to discharge this servant of hers for telling the truth, as she threatens. You will easily perceive that it will give an appearance of injustice and passion to her proceedings, of which they are doubtless totally devoid, and at the same time it will be unchristian and unjust. Moreover, I fear, if she do not withdraw the threat, that my office will compel me to take unpleasant measures in regard to a person thus endeavouring by menaces to turn aside the course of justice."

"Oh! It was but an ebullition of anger," replied the bishop, "easily excused in a mother who has lost her son. It was never intended seriously, of course; and I am sure she will refrain from any expression of the same kind in future."

The bishop sat down again by Madame de Bausse, to speak with her for a moment, and there he remained, notwithstanding his previous anxiety to depart. What had been his purposes we must not take upon ourselves to assert; but it is clear that, as soon as he found that the archers were too far gone for him to reach the *évêché* before them, he was less desirous of quitting the saloon than before.

Jeannette Cottille and the lacquey Morris arrived at the same time, but the intendant thought fit to examine the fair *couturière* first. She was a pretty-looking young woman, apparently not overburdened with modesty, though frank and simple enough in her demeanour; and, when asked if Jean Marais had lately passed any time with her, she replied at once, "*Ah, pauvre garçon!* I know they have been accusing him of things he never committed, and I'll tell the truth, whatever comes of it; for it can do him no harm, I'm sure, though it may do some to me. The last time I saw him was on the seventh of this month, and then he came and spent an hour with me."

"You have learned your tale, child!" cried Madame de Bausse in a sharp tone. "How should you recollect so pat that it was the seventh?"

"Oh! I can tell you very well, madam," answered the girl: "I had promised your maid Mathilde to send home, on that day, your false ——"

Madame de Bausse waved her hand, impatiently exclaiming, "I dare say you knew all about it."

The seamstress was about to reply, and her rejoinder might not have been much to the satisfaction of Madame de Bausse; but the intendant interposed gravely, demanding, "At what hour did you see him?" and on Jeannette replying, "At twelve o'clock exactly; I know it quite well, for my two girls had just gone to their dinner," he nodded his head, slowly saying, "That will do; you may retire. Bring in the lacquey."

Morris was accordingly ushered into the saloon, looking somewhat white at finding himself in the hands of an archer. Madame de Bausse fidgeted upon her chair, and went the length of nodding, winking, and shrugging at him. The intendant, on the contrary, told him to tell the truth, and that he had nothing to fear; adding, with a degree of sternness in his tone, "The slightest prevarication will convey you to prison. Now, mark!" he continued—"I find it stated

that a quarrel took place between Monsieur de Bausse and his valet, Jean Marais, on the night of the sixth of this month. Do you know anything of it?"

"Yes, monseigneur," replied the man: "a quarrel did take place, and a very bad quarrel too; for——"

His eye caught the expression of Madame de Bausse's countenance at that moment, and he paused and hesitated.

"Were you ever in prison?" demanded the intendant; "if not, you are very likely to be there within five minutes, should you suffer a sign from any one to prevent you from telling the truth. Finish out what you were about to say."

"I say, then," continued the man, "that it was a very bad quarrel, too; for Jean came down with his nose bleeding, and told me his master had struck him."

"Was the blow a severe one?" demanded the intendant; "was it bleeding much?"

"Oh, no," replied the lacquey: "a drop or two had fallen upon the breast of his shirt, and there was some on his handkerchief, but it soon stopped."

"Do you know if the valet threatened his master in consequence?" demanded the intendant.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed the lacquey; "he threatened to leave him immediately—at least, so he told me."

"But do you think," inquired his interrogator, "that the marquis had any particular dislike to this man, Jean Marais, which made him strike him?"

"Oh, no, sir," replied the man: "he has done the same to us all at different times, but we did not mind it. He once threw a boot at my head."

Not a muscle of the intendant's face moved; but, telling the lacquey he might retire, he ordered the prisoner to be brought before him.

"Jean Marais," he said, as soon as he appeared, "you have been accused of a serious crime, and in consequence of that accusation you have been committed to prison till such time as it was possible to investigate the grounds of the charge against you. You foolishly and rashly made your escape from the hands of justice, and might have subjected yourself to severe punishment on that account. Your subsequent voluntary surrender may be received as atonement for the offence; and, the accusation having been now sifted and inquired into, I find that there is not the slightest motive or cause whatsoever for suspecting you of the crime with which you have been charged. You are, therefore, from this moment at liberty, and may go whithersoever you please."

"Mighty well!" cried Madame de Bausse, rising indignantly; "mighty well! So I am told I have brought an

unfounded accusation—am I? Well, I will take care that this is made known. I wish you good morning, sir; I wish you good morning. This is fine justice, indeed, when a lady of my rank and station is not to be believed against a valet-de-chambre!"

"Good morning, madam," replied the imperturbable intendant, bowing low and calmly; "good morning, Monsieur de Clermont. Monsieur d'Artonne, I am obliged to you for urging me to give this case immediate attention. Is there anything else I can do to serve you?"

CHAPTER XV.

It was in the afternoon of the same day of which we have just been speaking, that Francis de Langy and his friend the count stood in one of the old-fashioned rooms of the Chateau d'Artonne, relating to the countess and Julie what had taken place at Clermont. The count touched upon the particulars but lightly, indeed, and came rapidly to the conclusion—Jean Marais' exculpation and liberation. Julie remained thoughtful; and, although she expressed much satisfaction at the result, Francis de Langy could not help fancying that she was somewhat more grave than might have been expected. The gratification of Madame d'Artonne was much more apparent and vivacious, and the girl of fifteen seemed to have changed places with the woman of seven or eight-and-thirty.

While the countess was thus congratulating herself upon the deliverance of the person who had saved her child's life, one of the servants, who had not accompanied the party on their tour, entered the room to announce that Jean Marais had arrived at the chateau, according to the orders he had received from Monsieur d'Artonne.

"Send him in, send him in," said the count; and, the moment after, our respectable friend Jean Marais stood bowing before the assembled party, with a face full of perfect satisfaction, and though respectful, certainly impudent enough.

The count received his thanks with grace and dignity, merely saying, with a slight inclination of the head, "I merit no gratitude, my good friend, having merely fulfilled my promise."

"That is what I am so grateful for, sir," replied Jean Marais, "as it is what no one has a right to expect from another in this world."

"Now, Francis," whispered the count, "let us see the result of your experiment."

And Francis de Langy, with a little of the embarrassed timidity of youth, looked round, and then said, "Well, Jean

Marais, Monsieur d'Artonne has acquitted himself of his share of gratitude towards you."

"Not quite," said Monsieur d'Artonne; "but never mind——"

"I have as yet done nothing to show mine," continued the young gentleman; "and I have the permission of the viscount to do the best I can to testify my sense of the service you lately rendered me. You expressed a great wish to enter into my service, or that of the Count d'Artonne. Now, it is not convenient for him to receive you into his family, as he has no vacant place; but I will offer you your choice of two things. Here is a purse containing a hundred louis: I will either give you that at once as a reward for what you have done, or I will take you as my valet-de-chambre. But I must warn you that, in the latter case, your conduct must be somewhat more strict and regular than perhaps it has hitherto been; for Monsieur de St. Medard, though he is a kind and liberal master, and not at all inclined to be severe upon venial errors, is of a determined and immovable nature, and will not pass over anything that he may consider an indication of a bad and depraved heart. Your wages will be the same as those of his own valet; and having stated the matter fairly to you, you can now make your choice, and either take the place, such as I have represented it, or the gold, and with that little fortune seek another situation, where perhaps you may be more at your ease. Would you like some time to consider your determination?"

"Oh, no, sir," replied Jean Marais, laughing; "I do not want even a single moment to consider: my determination is made already. First impulses are not always the best, but they are always the pleasantest to follow."

"Then I suppose you will take the purse, and leave the place?" said Monsieur d'Artonne.

"Oh dear, no, sir," replied Jean Marais; "I will do nothing of the kind. The place for me, if you please, and the purse for the baron's pocket."

"I thought so," said Julie, with a well-pleased smile, little fancying that to an observant eye the look and the words, common and meaningless as they might seem, would betray more of the secrets of the heart than she might be very willing should appear.

Jean Marais saw all about it in a moment; and Madame d'Artonne said to herself, "The girl who thinks the situation of his servant so desirable would not very much object to be his wife."

The valet, however, bowed low to the young lady, replying, "Thank you, mademoiselle, for doing me justice. I could not hesitate a moment, under any circumstances, be-

tween a good situation, which I hope long to retain, and a hundred louis, which most likely would be gone to-morrow. But, besides, I take a very particular interest in this young gentleman, and have more motives for attaching myself to him than one."

"Indeed!" said Francis de Langy; "may I ask what?"

"Oh, sir," replied Jean Marais, with one of his light but somewhat sarcastic laughs, "they are, first and foremost, because I think you a very charming and excellent young gentleman; and, secondly, because my family are not a little indebted to yours. An excellent relation of mine, now Marguerite Latouches, formerly Marguerite Lemaire, was once *femme-de-chambre* to the marquise, your mother, who married her to my good uncle Gerard."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Francis de Langy; "are you their nephew? As you must know well then, she was, moreover, my foster-mother."

"Exactly," said Jean Marais, somewhat drily; but the moment after he added, in a very different manner, "Ay, sir, and many is the time you have sat upon my knee when you were a child, and I was a youth younger than you are now."

There is something in the memory of early years and young affections which wakes up in the breast, even of the hardened and criminal, and still more in the heart of the light, the thoughtless, and the vicious, sweeter and holier feelings, which, however transitory they may be in themselves, have still a purifying influence of shorter or longer duration, according to circumstances, but ever tending through regret towards repentance. Those feelings, for the time, too, affect the outward man; and though he may struggle against them, and strive to cover them with the light and sparkling veil of careless gaiety, or the thick cloak of dogged resolution, they will still give a more thoughtful or a more tender character to the look and manner of him who experiences them, and tell the beholder that the heart within is touched. Such was the case in the present instance with Jean Marais; and as he uttered the words, "Many is the time you have sat upon my knee when you were a child, and I was a youth younger than you are now," the light air of gay effrontery died away, his tone was softened and saddened, and dropping his eyes to the floor, he fell into a fit of thought.

"Well," said the Count d'Artonne, after a moment's pause, "all these circumstances will form a bond between your young master and yourself, which, I trust, may lead you to serve him faithfully and well; and now you must make my steward take care of you while we have still the honour and the pleasure of his company at the Chateau d'Artonne."

"I will serve him, sir, better perhaps than he thinks," replied Jean Marais; and making a low bow, he was retiring from the room, when Francis called him back again, saying, "I must not make my poor service your only reward, Jean Marais; that will not be sufficient recompense: here are fifty out of the hundred louis for you; and I may promise, at the end of the year, if your conduct receives the approbation of Monsieur de St. Medard, he will bestow upon you the other fifty, both as a reward for the past and an encouragement for the future."

Jean Marais took the money without the slightest affectation of reluctance, replying gaily, "I will be a very good young man indeed, sir. I have heard folks declare that virtue is its own reward; and, like other hard-working people, it has but poor pay, it is true; but, depend upon it, it never works so well as when it has something to work for."

"I have an account to settle with you too, Jean Marais," said the Count d'Artonne; "but really I hardly know what to offer you as a recompense. However, if you will think over the matter, and let me know anything that you desire, if it be in reason I will not deny it to you. Take time to consider."

"No, sir; I do not want time," replied Jean Marais: "being now a rich man and well provided for, I have but one thing to ask of anybody under heaven, and am only afraid that you mayn't think it quite reasonable."

"Let me hear what it is," said the count.

"Oh! it's a long story, sir," replied Jean Marais.

"Always an unreasonable thing in itself," answered Monsieur d'Artonne. "However, we have a little time before the intendant comes to dinner; so, if it be not so long as one of Mademoiselle de Scuderi's romances, we shall get through it."

"Well, then, sir," replied Jean Marais, "there is a poor fellow in the lower prison at Clermont, named Antoine Burc, who is charged with poaching on your lands——"

"Oh! I know all about that story," exclaimed the count; "but what is your request?"

"That you would withdraw the charge, sir," said Jean Marais, boldly. "Poor fellow! he is as good a creature as ever lived."

The count waved his hand. "You need not enter into the question," he answered gravely; "I am sorry to say I cannot grant your request. You must think of something else."

Jean Marais looked down and bit his lip; Francis de Langy turned his eyes upon the count, with some mortification and disappointment in his countenance; and Julie gazed at her father for a moment with evident surprise, but then caught

his hand with a gay smile, exclaiming, "He is jesting, he is jesting. I see it on the corner of his lip; he is jesting."

"No, indeed," said the count, smiling likewise; "I am speaking the plain truth, Julie. I cannot withdraw the charge, because—I have withdrawn it already. It was made during our absence, without my consent; and, as I think the punishment in this country very much too great for the offence, the moment I heard of it I gave orders to stop all proceedings on my part. Jean Marais must, therefore, think of something else; for I trust that Antoine Bure will be at liberty to-morrow."

"I have thought of something else already, sir," cried Jean Marais. "You shall let me carry him the news, sir, and tell him that you did it by your own act, without any solicitation."

"That as you please," replied the count; "but as I see you have not yet decided upon the recompense for saving my daughter's life which you would most desire, take time, as I said before, to consider of it, and let me know when you have made up your mind."

Almost as he spoke, the sound of wheels rolling over the stones of the court-yard announced the coming of a visiter, and, going out with ceremonious politeness to receive him, the count met the intendant at the door of the chateau, and returned with him to the room where the rest of the party were assembled. It is scarcely possible to describe the manner of this worthy officer of the crown, as he entered and paid his respects to the Countess d'Artonne and Julie, without combining incompatibilities. It was perfectly easy, and yet it was restrained; but it was with that sort of restraint which depended upon his own will, upon his own habits: it was not in the slightest degree the restraint of awkwardness or uncertainty. You saw that he was doing nothing by impulse; that in the smallest as well as in the greatest he had a guard upon every word, look, and movement; that his mind was present in everything; that he did all that he wished to do, and yet did not do one-half that other men would have done who sought to make themselves agreeable. I am not sure that there is any English expression by which I can convey to the reader exactly what I mean, and even in French I must do it by negatives. To borrow an expression from that language, however, he had no *abandon*; and yet there was something powerful and striking in the very mastery of himself which he seemed to possess. All that is deep and unapproachable, whether moral or physical, is generally impressive. It matters not much whether it be great or whether it be little, whether it be pleasing or whether it be displeasing; the very act of baffling our efforts

to penetrate it implies power, and the idea of power is almost always more or less productive of the sublime. Sometimes, indeed, the smallest image which can be presented to the human mind, when combined even remotely with the fact of power, gives birth to the sublime in the highest and most overwhelming degree; and, of all the images by which the Hebrew prophets and poets have endeavoured to convey to narrow humanity some conception of the Almighty, the most awful is found in "the still small voice."

But to return to lower things. In seeing the man we speak of, one felt from his very aspect that there was a mind of no ordinary power beneath. There might also be violent passions: one suspected it; one fancied that it was so; and yet one could not tell why. It was, in fact, as when one gazes on a tiger walking calmly and majestically up and down his den, with a step as noiseless as that of a cat; we see the terrible strength that lies in those gliding and easy limbs, and divine the fierce and bloodthirsty spirit that dwells in that tranquil and graceful form.

We cannot pause upon all that took place during dinner, nor give even any specimen of the conversation that passed between the parties there present. With every one but the intendant the reader is already well acquainted, and therefore it is upon his conduct that we must principally dwell. He did not speak much; but what he did say was always to the point, clear, accurate, and sometimes brilliant; but the most sparkling things he uttered were so easy in manner, that the hearer was impressed with the conviction that he could say more sparkling things still; and so little did he seem to value the powers which he displayed, that one felt inclined to suppose he showed but a small part of the treasures of his mind. To Madame d'Artonne he paid marked and peculiar attention, listened to her with that silent flattery which is so captivating, and answered but briefly, more in comments on what she had said than by observations of his own. To Monsieur d'Artonne his demeanour was the same as we have depicted it in the morning. With Julie he conversed only once or twice, but then with a bland smile and look of interest. Of Francis de Langy he took no notice whatsoever, and he did so on purpose. If the young gentleman spoke upon any occasion, he never interrupted him: he showed him no rudeness whatsoever; but, the moment Francis had done, he broached some new topic, as if he had not heard a word the other had uttered, or judged his observations unworthy of any attention.

Had Francis de Langy been of a vain or conceited character, he would have been bitterly mortified; as it was, he was not pleased. But, though he was by no means self-sufficient or

arrogant in disposition, yet he felt within his own breast powers of mind and energies of character which the supercilious inattention even of a man of great intellect could not keep down. To him the dinner passed off unpleasantly. But let us inquire what was the effect upon the mind of Julie d'Artonne. It was very strange: in listening to the words of the intendant, in marking his demeanour, there was something that she shrank from, she knew not what; and yet she could not help listening, she could not help observing with eager interest. There was a sort of fascination about him, unpleasant, yet strong—stronger, perhaps, than if he had paid her marked attention, and in some degree mingling admiration with dislike. It was like the fabled fascination of the serpent upon the bird, and was in fact painful; yet, though she strove to withdraw her attention, she could not do so.

But let not the reader suppose there was anything uncommon in her feelings: the same effect is produced every day by the same qualities, though perhaps not always to the same extent: it is woman's nature to look up, and great powers have always great command over her. Whether there be such a thing as animal magnetism or not, there is certainly such a thing as mental magnetism; but it happens, sometimes happily, sometimes unhappily, that in the breast of woman love and admiration are two perfectly distinct things. They may be combined, but, far from being always so, are very often separate; and the man whom a woman admires the most is not unfrequently the one of all others for whom she could feel the least tenderness.

Did Julie then admire the intendant? After a certain fashion she assuredly did; she did so more than he deserved, but not in the way he would have liked. It was the admiration of astonishment rather than of pleasure; nor was it unnatural that, while she gave him little credit for qualities of the heart, she should give him too great credit for high qualities of mind. The fair and soft companions of our troublous path are, by Nature's will, beings of trust and confidence; they need hard teaching in the ways of life to make them think that things are not as they seem. Where man will pause till he has examined, will try talent and genius by a thousand touchstones, and not be satisfied till he is sure that it is gold indeed, woman will but too often take, unweighed, uncriticised, a gilded bauble, and hold it as a jewel of high price, till it tarnishes under her touch, and she finds too late how worthless was the thing she valued. The air and the assumption of great abilities, unless the hollowness of the pretence be very apparent indeed, is generally enough for her; and it is not wonderful that in this case, where there

was an intellect of great power, Julie should give him who possessed it credit for more than really belonged to him, and take upon trust all that he assumed. But she never dreamt that any other feeling could be supposed to have a share in her breast towards a man some thirty years older than herself; and, luckily for them both, neither did Francis de Langy. He disliked the intendant, with that sort of keen distaste which a young man of genius always entertains towards a supercilious though talented man of the world who under-estimates his abilities, with that longing for strife with him, either physical or intellectual, which an eager spirit always feels towards the arrogant assumption of superiority; but jealousy had no share in his sensations. He was glad, however, when the intendant retired, which was about an hour before nightfall, and still more glad when Julie d'Artonne reminded her mother that she had promised to walk round the gardens and the park.

Each sensation of the human heart seems naturally to require some peculiar and appropriate place for its full development, and none more eagerly than love. The counterfeit passion may reign in gay saloons and lighted halls, or in darker and more confined dwellings, and revel amidst noise and confusion, the vain clatter of tongues, and all the empty luxury of art, feeling itself there most at home where nature is most excluded; but the pure, high love of the young and unperverted heart always longs for the presence of calm and sublime things—the free air, the wide sky, the sunny verge of the sparkling ocean, fields, mountains, woods, and all those objects that make the soul thrill with vague memories or fancies of an earlier and a holier state, when love was the brightest flower of paradise. The narrow and confined walls of houses built with hands seem to oppress and keep in the divine spirit within us, and Francis de Langy longed to be with her in the midst of the splendid scene that surrounded them.

Madame d'Artonne replied that she was too much fatigued, but bade the two young people go themselves; and Monsieur d'Artonne promised to follow them soon.

They went out together, the lover and the beloved—so young, so very young, to feel such emotions, and yet experiencing them strongly, deeply, truly, with no difference between their sensations and those of manhood's love except the purity of early youth. They wandered on, they saw beautiful scenes, they heard the sweet sounds of evening, they gazed upon the glowing sky, and, drinking in from the cup of Nature deep and congenial draughts of heaven's own poetry, they lived for a brief space in that dreamy enjoyment in which there is no current of thought, no distinctness of

idea, but that mere sensation of enjoyment which perhaps may approach near to the happiness of an after-state, when all the glory of God shall give full fruition to the unfettered souls of the blessed.

They were seated side by side upon a fragment of basaltic rock, a wild ash-tree* waving its feathery branches above their heads, the giant mountains of Auvergne stretching blue upon the left, the gorgeous setting of a summer day's sun flooding with rosy light the glowing sky before them, the sparkling stream glistening in the valley beneath, love in their hearts and tranquillity all around, when Julie's father approached, seeing them before he was seen, and looking upon them with the mingling tenderness of memory and hope. When they did notice him, neither of them moved, for they had nothing to conceal, nothing that shunned the eye of those whom they revered. Julie held out her hand to her father as he came near, asking, "Is not this beautiful?" and replying, with more than one meaning in his words, he said, "Beautiful, indeed, my dear child!"

Monsieur d'Artonne sat down beside them, and gazed in silence for several minutes over the prospect. At length his eyes filled with tears, for it is only to the breast of youthful innocence that such moments bring enjoyment unmingled with regret. Each step that man takes forward in life tramples down some flower; and, when he pauses for a moment to look around him, he must needs give a tear to all which those footsteps have destroyed.

The emotion was transitory, however, from whatever cause it sprung; and, banishing all memories, the count joined with the two young beings beside him in the enjoyment of the present hour. He gave himself up to happiness; and, when he turned to walk back with them towards the chateau, a feeling of repose and peace reigned in his breast, as well as in theirs.

How rarely in this life is such a sensation anything but the harbinger of agitation and care! Whether it was or was not so in the present instance, the reader who goes on with me will know.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Rest you merry!" says one of our friends in Shakspeare; but, assuredly, it would have been a very unnecessary benediction if addressed to our good friend Jean Marais; for his was a nature in which merriment was so inherent, that it would have needed an ocean of sorrow and a bucketful of philosophy to drown out the sparkling flame of his gaiety.

"Not at all, not at all!" he cried, as he sat in a chamber

of the Chateau d'Artonne, which served the purposes of what we call the servants' hall in England, with Madame d'Artonne's pretty lady's-maid beside him, a somewhat grim-looking valet-de-chambre opposite, and three or four other servants around. "Not at all, my good friend; fortunate, instead of unfortunate, in having been in a prison without deserving it. It shows one life, and makes one love liberty the more. Besides, what has been the result? If the bird had not been in a cage, it would never have escaped from a cage, and I should have been jogging on in the service of Madame de Baugse, as dull and plodding a fellow as thyself, Peter."

The other servants chuckled; and Peter himself, with a grim and not very well-pleased smile, replied, "Plodding, but not dull, Jean Marais, as you may some day discover."

"Discover!" cried Jean Marais, laughing aloud, and turning a merry glance at the femme-de-chambre, between whom and the valet there existed an unconfirmed *tendresse*, which was likely, unless nipped in the bud, to bear the fruit of matrimony. "Does the fellow take me for Christopher Columbus? No, no—I am no discoverer; and if I did go upon such a voyage, it would be into some deeper sea than your brains, Master Peter."

"The discovery may come upon you, whether you like it or not," replied Peter, significantly, and with a good many of the passions that we pray against very busy in his breast, for no man is insensible of the danger of being ridiculed in the presence of a woman whom he loves. But Jean Marais was not a person to pay the slightest attention to either hostile hints or glances; and the only effect which the valet's indignation had upon him was to make him commence a series of very decided, and, to say the truth, somewhat successful gallantries towards the pretty lady's-maid, which kept the blood of his rival in a vehement ferment for the next half-hour.

Now, this Peter, as he was called, otherwise Peter Neri, was by no means a despicable opponent in point of personal strength. His father had been an Italian, settled in France in days of yore, and exercising the worshipful trade of posture-master and sword-player: some said, indeed, that he had added other vocations, which did not so much covet the light; and from his happy union with a femme-de-chambre, who had, to use a familiar phrase, feathered her nest somewhat better than might have been expected, sprang the individual who now occupied the important post of valet-de-chambre to the Count d'Artonne. He was a tall and sturdy personage, possessing united the high qualities of his father and his mother; but, at the same time, it must be acknowledged to his honour, that in the service of his master, which he had now graced for nearly ten years, he had shown no

greater inclination to pilfer than was justified by the customs and privileges of his calling. He was of a sullen and somewhat morose disposition, and, as many men are found to be in this world, unattachable by any feeling but one, and that an animal feeling. Thus, as may be supposed, he was not greatly loved by any one in the household except the lady's-maid, whom he had singled out for the object of his solitary affection; and the other servants were glad to see him annoyed, while her partisanship was neutralized by the gay blandishments of Jean Marais.

The reader, if he have seen even but little of the world, will very easily conceive the gradual progress of a quarrel from taunts and irritation, through various stages, to the climax of a corporeal encounter; and at the end of half-an-hour from the time at which we opened the scene whereof we now treat, Jean Marais walked round the table and seized Monsieur Pierre by the throat. The women screamed and called out, all the men talked and endeavoured to part them, and they themselves struggled together with a fierceness and vigour which threatened speedily to end the contest by knocking the brains of either one or the other out against the wall. The room in which this scene took place was a long narrow hall, with a door at one end and a window at the other, which window looked out into a little green patch shaded by lime-trees, and separated from the rest of the park by a road which led up towards the hills.

It so happened that, in the very height of the contention within, Julie, Francis de Langy, and the Count d'Artonne were walking slowly and thoughtfully along this very road, on their return to the chateau; and, the windows being open, the mingled yell issued forth and reached their ears.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed the count. "Our quiet house is seldom disturbed by such noises as this. Go on—I will follow you directly;" and, approaching one of the innumerable side-doors which decorated the French chateau of that period, he entered the house and walked straight to the hall. For a moment the belligerent parties did not perceive his presence; but a cry of "The count! the count!" from the rest of the servants made them pause for an instant, and Jean Marais took his hands from his adversary's throat. Peter Neri, however, thought he had gained an advantage by this movement which was not to be lost, and darted upon him again like a tiger, under the very eyes of his master. But he had made a mistake. Jean Marais was perfectly prepared to receive him; and, catching him by the middle, he lifted him from the ground, and cast him headlong back upon the pavement, with a fall that left him stunned and bewildered.

"What is the meaning of all this?" demanded the count, who had observed the whole.

"Why, simply, sir," replied Jean Marais, "that my good friend Peter, here, is very hospitably inclined towards me, and commenced his civilities by kindly telling me that I was unfortunate in having been put into prison and accused of murdering my young master, for that the charge would stick by me all my life; and he just now ended his kind speeches by calling me a thief and a jail-bird."

"I did not," said Peter, rising surlily from the ground.

"Oh, yes, Peter—you did," cried the lady's-maid.

"I heard him! I heard him!" exclaimed several of the other servants.

"Well, I spoke no more than was true, if I did," muttered Peter.

"Silence, sir!" said the count; "you have behaved very ill, and I will not have you insult the servant of a gentleman who is staying in my house. I shall speak to you farther upon the subject to-night, and in the meantime I insist upon your behaving civilly to him. If I hear that you utter one offensive word, I will discharge you. You know me, and I will keep my promise." Thus saying, he turned and quitted the hall.

About an hour after, the party in the saloon broke up, and the count retired to his dressing-room, where, in a few minutes after, he was joined by his worthy valet; and the count immediately bestowed upon him a very severe admonition in regard to his conduct towards Jean Marais, saying that he had a great mind to discharge him. The man smiled, with somewhat of a sarcastic turn about his lip, which surprised Monsieur d'Artonne and excited his indignation; nor was his anger at all assuaged by the reply which accompanied this expression of countenance, and which was to the following effect:—

"I don't think you will discharge me, sir."

"And, pray, why not?" demanded the count, controlling his feelings.

"Oh, sir, you know I have been a long time in your service," answered the valet with an indifferent air; "and an old servant always gets into his master's ways—and into his secrets. But I was going to ask you, sir," he continued, as if to change the subject, "whether I had not better sponge your *habit-de-chasse* all over, for the drops of blood that you washed out about a month ago, on the day that Monsieur de Bausse was first missed, still show a little."

The count turned as pale as ashes; but, commanding himself, he replied, after a momentary pause, in a calm and cold tone—

"Oh, no, there is no need of that; it will soon be spotted in the same way, the first time I go out to shoot. But take notice of what I have said to you about this man, Jean Mairais; for, if I find that you behave any more as you have done this night, I will discharge you as sure as I live."

The valet smiled again, but made no further reply, and the count soon after dismissed him for the night. When he was gone and the door closed, Monsieur d'Artonne clasped his hands together, and then struck his clenched fist upon his forehead. The next moment he cast himself down upon his knees, and leaning his arms upon the seat of a large arm-chair, he buried his eyes in his hands, and remained thus for nearly half-an-hour, while the agitation of his mind might be traced by the heaving of his chest and the writhing of his whole frame. Then came an instant of comparative calm; and rising up with a face pale, sunk and death-like, he waved his hand sadly, saying—

"It is gone—it is gone for ever; there is no more peace for me on earth!"

CHAPTER XVII.

IN the summer season of our lives, as in the brightest period of the year, there come days full of a soft and sleepy balminess, when the happy heart, moved by no fierce desires, seems to fall into a dreamy slumber, and the hours slip by us almost unmarked as they go. Who has not known them so sweetly present, yet so rapidly gone, that we have awakened from the pleasant vision and doubted whether it were true or not?

Thus passed the few following days to Francis de Langy and to Julie d'Artonne; the only thing that even brought a shadow over the sunshine of the latter being to observe a heavy shade upon her father's face; while, with Francis de Langy, the only interruption of his dream took place during the hours which he spent in the chamber of the good Abbé Arnoux. In the mean time the abbé himself made some slight progress towards convalescence: it was very slight, indeed; for, although he improved a good deal one day, he fell back again the next; and his recovery still seemed doubtful, and promised at all events to be slow.

It was the seventh evening after the departure of Monsieur de St. Medard when the courier from Paris, passing through Riom, amongst other letters addressed to the chateau left one for the Abbé Arnoux, in the handwriting of the viscount; and we must beg the reader's permission to give it here, protesting against the supposition that this work is a novel or a romance, a tragedy, or any other kind of composition which

requires an author to embarrass himself by unities. It is simply the histories of certain personages whose fate was closely linked together; and the picture of Monsieur de St. Medard's mind, in all its phases, forms as much one of our objects in writing as any other matter that we shall touch upon in the course of the work.

MY DEAR ABNE (he said).—I have reached this great city without any impediment; and I write to you, not to give you any account of the rolling of my carriage along the highway, the changing of my horses, or of any other of those events which are so frequently communicated by one friend to another, either because he has no thoughts that are worth the transmission, or that he does not think his correspondent worthy to share them; but, on the contrary, to tell you how my mind has travelled, since we last met, upon a road on which you yourself directed it, and what discoveries it has made by the way.

I perceive, then, that the first thing I have to combat is a certain peculiar habit of thought, which would fain lead me away from your course of argumentation to my own; for custom, I find, is as powerful over the actions of the mind as over the body, and as good old Montaigne remarks, "*C'est, à la vérité, une violente et traistresse maistresse d'escole que la Coutume*," who establishes in us, little by little and without our knowing it, her authority; but having by this gentle and humble commencement planted and fixed it by the aid of Time, she soon makes a furious and tyrannical use of it, against which we have not even power to raise our eyes. I have been amused at making this discovery of myself; and think I perceive in others, also, that we, who call ourselves philosophers, somewhat narrow our path by never reasoning but in one direction. I am making a vigorous struggle against custom in my own case, however; and will endeavour, as fast as possible, to follow a fresh plan in regard to the subject of inquiry which I have promised you to investigate anew. I will attempt to clear my mind of all preconceived opinions upon the subject, to start from the point of perfect ignorance, to ask myself, what is there in all I see around me throughout the universe that should make me believe that God has thought fit to reveal his will to man, and to suppose that it is a record of truths regarding things beyond this world, more than other compositions of man?

Although I have had plenty of time to reflect, as I have rolled along this dusty road towards the capital, yet at present my thoughts upon this subject are still in confusion, and I am, as it were, sweeping out the house. But I will confess to you, with a sincere wish that you would help me to get rid of it, that there is one old customary conclusion from which I cannot divest myself, and which will prevent me, as long as it remains, from ever looking upon the Bible as anything else than a collection of highly-poetical works by various very clever Jews. I cannot at all conceive such a Being as we are told God is so meddling with the affairs of man. But I must go to the bottom of my objection, in order that if possible you may remove it. My mind, then, is altogether repugnant to the idea of a special providence, even admitting your first great principle, the existence of a God. Taking it for granted that there is such a Being, and that he possesses, as you represent him, all the attributes in which Christians believe, does it not seem beneath the majesty of Jehovah to superintend the minor concerns of mortal men, and of things still less in the scale of creation? But, still more, is it not totally inconsistent with the idea of an omniscient Being to suppose that he would interrupt the course of his general laws for any individual object? Is it not absurd to conceive that a Being, equally just, powerful, and wise, would be turned from his purpose or assuaged in his wrath by the prayers or repentance of man? An English poet not long dead has said, with more truth than poets generally display—

God rules by general not by partial laws:

and indeed the geometrical principles which we discover in the portion of the universe within our ken show us one universal rule, which, supposing, as we do for the moment, that there is a God, must be his law, from which there is no reason to believe he would deviate. It seems to me, in short, my dear abbé, that you Christians make your God act in a manner inconsistent with the very attributes that you assign to him. If you can say anything to remove this difficulty, pray do.

I write this in the trust that you are much better than when I left you, for I have just received a letter which Francis wrote on the day after I left Rome. So his friend Jean Marais has stood the trial, and is installed in the high post of his *valet-de-chambre*! I trust that it may turn out well, but I doubt: you know that I am a great doubter of all things unproved. But do you, my dear abbé, never doubt that I am your most sincere friend,

ST. MEDARD.

On the evening when this letter arrived, the abbé was not so well as he had previously been; but the good old man read it eagerly, and declared he would write an answer without delay. Francis de Langy, who was sitting with him at the time, tried to persuade him to put it off for two or three days; but the abbé had his peculiarities as well as other people; and one of his notions was, that when a man pauses and procrastinates in doing what is right, Fate generally steps in and prevents him from doing it at all. He persisted, then, in his resolution of answering the letter immediately; and, as it was evident to Francis de Langy that he could not accomplish it with his own hand, the young gentleman had no course left but to take the pen and write the reply, while the abbé lay in his bed and dictated as follows:—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter has given me great pleasure, as it shows me, beyond all doubt, that the clouds are about to be dispersed from your mind, and that the light of truth, reason, and religion will soon shine in. To all your objections touching the nature and the character of the Deity, and of how he would or could act under certain circumstances, I might reply, that neither we nor others know anything upon the subject, and can only judge of what we see. I might add, that in reasoning abstractly and independent of revelation, it is just as absurd and unfounded a conclusion to say that God acts by certain geometrical laws, because we find that those laws obtain in certain parts of the creation within our sight, as to say that he acts by irregular impulses, because we see what appears to us to be infinite irregularity in many of the phenomena of nature; and I might point out to a philosophical mind, that the principles of his actions are as much beyond human comprehension as the idea of unlimited space, or any other of those extraordinary facts to which we are obliged to assent without being able to comprehend them. But I will make no other use of such a course of argument than once more to inculcate deep humility in approaching, with the very narrow faculties of humanity, a subject of infinite extent. Of that subject a very small portion is all that is necessary for us to consider, and indeed is all that we have even the capability of investigating. If we attempt to carry our view beyond that limited horizon, we shall find that everything becomes, in the moral as well as in the physical world, indistinct and conjectural. I may, however, deal with your difficulties in another way: not, indeed, bringing forward proofs of a system in which I myself believe, for all your assertions are out negative; and it would be endless to answer every such objection as man's vanity or ingenuity might suggest, and impossible to prove a thousand things

which are neither within the scope of our faculties nor necessary to our conviction in regard to the great truths of religion. I will only offer a few observations upon the points you have suggested, which may serve to sweep such stumbling-blocks from your way, and reserve whatever I may have to assert as positive for some future occasion, when, if God spare my life, I trust to find your mind prepared to receive the great fundamental proofs on which our faith is founded.

Your mind, you say, is repugnant to the idea of a special providence; perhaps I might add, to God's moral government of the world—at all events, to the supposition that he is moved by our prayers, softened by our repentance, ready to avert from us the evil consequences of our own acts or those of others, or in short, to care for the pitiful animal man, who is but a minute insect in the midst of creation; and you persuade yourself that these objections spring from a vast idea of the dignity and powers of God. You will be surprised when I assert that they are founded, on the contrary, upon a very limited and petty notion of the Divinity. If you can but stretch your mind to conceive that to him all things are for ever present, that every being stands at once in his sight, that time and space to him do not exist, that to him nothing is small, nothing is great, you will behold the same almighty and omniscient Being superintending every part of his creation, from what we consider the greatest to what we term the smallest, with the same infinite care which created them at first; seeing, or foreseeing, if you will, the sin and the repentance, the necessity and the prayer, in the same ever-present instant; and providing for each and all by one act of volition, passing along the complicated but unentangled chain of cause and effect, from immemorial ages in the past to events and epochs in that dark night of futurity which his sight alone can penetrate, but which to him is as much in being as anything that is or has been. Far be it from me to say that the Almighty does not rule the universe upon some vast and general scheme; but that special and superintending providence is a part of that scheme forms with me an object of humble trust and most confident belief.

Of all the objections which have been stated, that which at first sight appears most plausible is implied by the assertion, that we cannot conceive an omniscient Being interrupting the course of his general laws for any individual purpose; but to this there are two answers:—First, that, from the infinitely minute portion of the infinitely vast whole which we can see, it is impossible for any one to say whether those very facts which we assume as instances of interruption are not indeed harmonious parts of one great scheme; and, secondly, that the daily convulsions in the universe, moral and physical—nay, every hourly change in the arrangement and disposition of things around us, except certain motions in which we have detected a degree of regularity—are evidences of that apparent interruption of general laws which is all that is necessary to the idea of a special providence.

It is that our understanding is too narrow, and our utmost knowledge too limited, to grasp the idea of a scheme so vast, that the some thousands of years to which our history extends, and the millions of worlds which we faintly descry, are but the most minute parts of a grand whole. It is but this narrowness of comprehension, this *angina mentis et animæ*, which makes us doubt even for a moment that the Almighty rules individually the fate of everything created. Even in speaking of the powers of God, our incapacity evinces itself by the very language that we use; and we are obliged to apply the terms which finite creatures have invented for the purpose of expressing finite objects, to the attributes and operations of an infinite Being. We say, "In the beginning." But to God when was the beginning? Yet, if we speak of the creation of our globe, or of the system to which it belongs, or of the constellation whereof our sun is a small star, or of the myriads of constellations which we descry, or of the countless and unnumbered multitudes from which not one small ray has ever visited this earth, the very fact of their creation was in itself an act of

special providence, and as great a deviation from any existing laws that we know of, or can conceive, as the manna sent to the children of Israel in the wilderness, the plagues which punished the obduracy of Pharaoh and his people, or the dispensation which wrought reconciliation between God and man. If the universe was created at all, and it is demonstrable that it has been created, that fact was a special providence, or in other words, a distinct act of the Almighty, taking place at a fixed and appropriate time, for a certain and definite purpose; and there is as much reason to believe that the earthquake which shakes one-half of the world, and the fall of a sparrow, though brought about by agents with which science or habit has rendered us familiar, are operations of the will of God, as to believe that he hung the firmament with suns or rolled the globe through space. Those acts in which the immediate operation of divine volition becomes more plainly visible to human eyes by a deviation from an ordinary and expected course of events, and which are displayed particularly in the history of the Jews, so far from being rendered doubtful by any just use of human reason, can only be considered as historical illustrations of that constant superintendence of the Almighty over every part of his creation which our reason shows to be an absolute consequence of the existence of an all-wise and all-powerful Being; and without presumption I may be permitted to say, that one of the most remarkable effects (if not one of the chief objects) of those evident acts of divine agency has been to keep alive a just notion of the Divinity through ages of darkness, and, during a long period of moral infancy and error, to afford to the nations selected as the depository of revealed truth a constant and tangible proof of important facts concerning the attributes of God, and thus, through times when all people were idolatrous and ignorant, to support revelation till wisdom was mature.

That there were other and still more glorious objects in the miracles displayed throughout the Hebrew history, I humbly hope and devoutly believe. But, even putting aside those manifestations of the active superintendence of the Almighty afforded by the history of the Israelites which a sceptic may hesitate to believe, and the vainer part of men of science, without denying, attempt to explain away, it seems to me that, even to our simple, unassisted reason, it is impossible to conceive that a Being who created all things from the greatest to the least, and who knows all things from the beginning to the end, and who has power over all things to the utmost verge of creation, does not rule, and guide, and superintend throughout the whole. While reason leads us to such a conclusion, the face of nature at every step affords us proofs that it is so. The very fact of creation, the very fact of change in anything, the very variations of the earth, the seasons, the events, from one ordinary and constant state, or regular and fixed recurrence, show that the will of the Almighty is in active, not in passive operation; and though there are some occurrences which, by their regular return, we have been enabled to form into a system, the great mass of events affecting ourselves is governed upon principles which we do not understand, but which clearly betoken a special providence over all things.

Were I to push the subject farther, it would soon lead me into the question of the origin of evil, upon which I should not like to enter at present, even as a matter of humble and speculative inquiry. Remember, my dear friend, that I am not bold and impious enough to fancy that I can explain the mysteries of God; nor, I trust, will you seek to comprehend things clearly above human comprehension. I know that if you strive diligently you will find such a body of facts, susceptible of distinct proof, as to establish beyond all doubt, to any unprejudiced mind, the existence of a Great Intelligence, which, having created all things, governs all things; and upon that vast foundation I do not fear to see built up the fabric of true faith in the great scheme of our salvation, the grand and crowning act of that special providence in which it is my greatest comfort to believe.

I will add but one word more, and that is upon the subject of the extraordi-

nary repugnance of man to believe in an intelligence higher than his own. He sees the effects of it in every work of nature; he can trace design in the structure of every flower and every animal; he can perceive contrivances calculated with the utmost nicety to accomplish certain ends; wherever he turns his eyes, he finds these infinitely varied and infinitely extensive; and yet, as a refuge for his own vanity to escape to from the conviction that the powers of his own mind are nothing when compared with those of God, he attributes all this to an inevitable necessity in the nature of things, and strips the Creator of all those qualities of which he himself is most proud, namely, reason and volition.

Enough for the present, my dear friend: I know you well, and am aware that with you to search is to find, to be convinced is to believe. That you may do so from your heart, and derive all those comforts from that belief which nothing but faith can give, is the sincere prayer of your devoted brother,

CHARLES AUNOUX.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHY should there not be railroads in everything? through time and space, as well as from London to Manchester—across the waste of history, and across the desert of Suez—along the highway of politics (with one door always locked, as on the road to Bath), and pierced through the hard depths of science (with tunnels as deep and as badly lighted as any between Devizes and Bristol, or Liege and Cologne)? Why should there not be railroads in everything? In truth, reader, are there not?

Oh, yes: the moral follows the material in accelerated speed; and we drive over roads along which we once crept, observing everything as we went, at the railway speed of fifty miles an hour; seeing nothing but the station from which we start and the terminus at which we arrive.

Jump in, reader, and away! We are bound for Paris; the distance is only three hundred miles, and you shall be there in a minute.

Doubtless, you recollect the Marchioness de Langy? A very pretty and an amiable person she was. She was a Frenchwoman, too, altogether, but a Frenchwoman of the best kind, and consequently none the worse for being of that country; for when a woman in the midst of many vices remains pure, in the midst of much infidelity remains faithful, she surely establishes, on the score of temptations overcome and evils resisted, a sufficient balance in her own favour, in the great account with the world, to justify a few little extravagances and frivolities. In the account with God it may be a different thing. The Marquis de Langy, too, was an amiable man in his way. They were two people well matched, and had, what was rare at that time in the world, and especially in France, a great deal of tender and kindly feeling. I say, especially in France, because that tender and

kindly feeling is there, not only as in other countries, ground down upon the heavy grindstone of interest and worldly pursuits, melted and dissolved away as in other countries by luxuries and vices, scattered and broken to pieces as in other countries by passions and contentions, but is also, as in no other country, blown to the four quarters of heaven by the light winds of *persiflage* and mockery. As the reader well knows, nothing can go down in France which has not a grand air; and at the times we speak of, to have given the heart any importance in the affairs of life, one would have had to put a sword by his side and to make him a *marquis*.

However, the Marquis and Marchioness de Langy had both too much good feeling to be able to hide it and too much good sense to try; but it would have been very much better for both of them if that good sense had extended so far as always to guide their good feeling in the proper direction, and to limit it to the proper extent. In most ordinary cases it did very well: they loved each other tenderly and affectionately, yet always with due decorum; but in regard to their children they carried their parental fondness to a pitch which stopped not a step short of weakness. This was especially the case with their eldest son, who, being always with them, of course engrossed the greater part of their attention, though the mind of both the marquis and marchioness often turned with the yearning of parental love towards him whom, for his own benefit, they had consigned to the care and guardianship of another. In regard to their son Victor, however, their misdirected affection went to the length of vicious indulgence; and, as may easily be supposed, such conduct towards a young man of strong passions and not very strong mind produced the natural fruits of self-will, licentiousness and violence.

At the early age which he had reached when his brother Francis set out for Auvergne, Victor de Langy had already twice called upon his father to pay very considerable debts, and had still more frequently required his aid to extricate him from the consequences of irregular and vicious conduct. Monsieur de Langy, it is true, had never come forward to his assistance without remonstrance and reproof; but these were so gently applied as, even in the first instance, to be listened to with little attention, and in the end to be heard with impatience and disrespect.

It was one morning, then, while the younger son of that noble house was dreaming sweet dreams by the side of Julie d'Artonne, that Monsieur and Madame de Langy were sitting together in a chamber of their hôtel in Paris. It was a large sunny room, with tall windows, which nearly reached the ceiling, but did not descend lower than three or four feet

from the floor, and a great deal of ornamental furniture—a splendid bed, looking as if it were never intended to be slept in; marble tables, so covered with clocks and vases that nothing else could find a place; and chairs, stiff and stately, ranged around the wall—gave the room that appearance of cold untenantedness which was the general characteristic of all the chief apartments of the day.

It is a strange fact, but no less true than strange, that the moral characteristics of a nation, as well as of an individual, show themselves remarkably in the style of furniture that they choose; and in the ornament without comfort, the mixture of coldness and glitter which the French saloons of that period displayed, we find no bad image of the heartless vanity and splendid emptiness of the people and the times.

Monsieur and Madame de Langy were alone, talking together of the future, that grand object of the human thought on which all the mind's energies are so vainly spent—the future, on which man so idly reckons as his possession, when it and all that it comprises are God's alone. Their anxieties were for their elder son, for his advancement in life, for a marriage they were planning between him and some girl of wealth and expectations; and they saw, in their baseless calculations, the injuries which their property had sustained more than repaired by her dowry, and a long race, bearing their noble name, marching on through coming times, which they fancied would be just like their own.

They were discussing the matter eagerly, perhaps a little sharply; for the marquis and marchioness differed upon one or two points, and the lady was, of course, resolved to have her own way. She was saying, "No, indeed: Victor shall carry the proposal himself, and I will school him into showing some degree of devotion and attention; I will answer for it, all will go right if you will but let me manage it."

Even as she spoke, there was a considerable noise below, and upon the stairs the unpleasant moving of many feet, and the murmur of voices in tones eager yet subdued—the sort of sound which tells one instantly that something has happened—something that agitates and excites, yet is to be concealed from somebody. We naturally think that it is from ourselves; and Fear, the veiled but constant companion of Hope, pushes before her bright and beaming fellow, and tells her tale of sorrows, misfortunes, and distress, often as false as those of the deceitful goddess of expectation.

Madame de Langy started, for the sounds were coming up the great staircase; and Monsieur de Langy stepped forward and opened the door. A groan mingled with the rustle of the approaching feet; and as soon as those who were coming up beheld him, there was an exclamation of "Ah, monsieur!"

Madame de Langy darted into the corridor, and perceived her son carried in the arms of four men. His coat was thrown lightly over him, as if it were a mantle, and the sheath of his sword was empty. His hat, too, was gone; and the curls of his hair—those beautiful curls with which his mother's hand had played so fondly in his childhood—fell back from a face now covered with the ashy hue of death; while down his left arm, which hung as if powerless by his side, streamed the red blood, appearing here and there through the fine sleeve of his shirt, dabbling the ruffles at his wrist, and dropping from the tips of his fingers.

"Good heaven! what is this?" cried Monsieur de Langy; while his mother, with a distracted scream, rushed to the side of the wounded man.

"Why, sir," said one of the servants, "he met this morning with Monsieur Eugene de Launay, whose sister, you know——"

Monsieur de Langy waved his hand. "What happened? what happened?" he demanded.

"Oh! carry him in, carry him in, and stanch the blood!" exclaimed Madame de Langy. "Here! here! lay him on this bed. Send for surgeons—bring the nearest first—then run for Robert! Oh dear, oh dear! how terrible this is!"

The unhappy young man was borne into the room where his father and mother had just been sitting talking over his future prospects. He was placed upon the couch; and his head, which had drooped forward, fell back upon the bolster. The coat of maroon-coloured silk that had been thrown over him was drawn aside, and the shirt soaked in gore exposed. It, too, was torn open by the trembling and eager hands of his parents; and there, in his right breast, was seen a small triangular wound, from which no blood was streaming, while on the left side appeared a corresponding aperture, pouring quickly forth the warm current of life. Madame de Langy strove to stop the bleeding by pressing her handkerchief tightly on the wound; and the marquis, who in his military career had seen death in many shapes, gazed hopelessly on the pale face of the stripling, merely pronouncing the word "Water!"

A ewer was immediately brought, and some drops were sprinkled on his brow and lips. The application produced some effect, for he opened his eyes, and they turned with a faint and heavy gaze upon the marchioness. His lips moved, too, for nearly a minute, and he seemed to fancy he was speaking; but the only articulate sounds that he uttered were the words "My mother!" with which the effort ended, and then came a low, moaning sort of sigh. His eyes closed and opened again, while a strong convulsive shudder passed

over his frame. His hand, which he had raised as if to grasp at something, fell heavily by his side—and all was still!

The signs were not to be mistaken, but still a mother's hopes clung round the form of the dead. She believed she saw the bosom heave, long after the last breath was fled; she thought she saw the light of life in those fixed glassy eyes, long after the lamp was out; she fancied motion in the lips; she even dreamed the colour was returning to the cheek. Her husband stood and gazed with tearless lids and a heavy frowning brow; but *he* did not deceive himself; and when a surgeon entered in haste and approached the bedside, he took his wife by the hand, cast his right arm round her, and saying "Come," drew her away.

"Oh! let me know if there is any hope," said Madame de Langy, as he supported her towards the door.

"Hope?" said the marquis in astonishment, for he knew not how a mother's heart can deceive itself. "Hope?—He is dead!" and the marchioness fell back upon his arm, as unconscious of all life's woes as he whom they had just left.

Monsieur de Langy gave her over into the hands of her women, and returned immediately to the chamber of death. Still there was not a tear in his eye; but a strong and bitter curl of his lip, and a heavy contraction of the brow, told plainly that anger aided him in mastering his grief.

"He is gone, sir," said the surgeon, as soon as the marquis entered; "I am sorry to say life has departed."

"I know it," replied Monsieur de Langy abruptly; "do you think I never saw a dead man before?—How did this happen?" he continued fiercely, turning to one of the servants. "François, you knave! you have pandered to all his vices. If you have had any share in this, woe be to you!"

"Indeed, sir," answered the valet, "it was not my place to stop Monsieur Victor in what he thought right to do. If you did not disapprove, I had nothing to do with it."

"You are right, scoundrel! you are right," cried the marquis; "a weak parent is chargeable with half a child's faults. Would to God I had sent you to the *bagne* when first I found out what you are! How did this happen, I ask? Let me have the truth, if there be anything like truth in you."

"Why, sir," replied the man, sturdily, "I can only tell you what I have heard. They say the count went somewhat too far with Mademoiselle de Launay last night, and offered her some violence, believing that a *petite demoiselle* like that might think herself honoured by his notice. She resented it, it seems; and, meeting her brother Eugene this morning in the garden of the Tuileries, Monsieur Victor retired with him to the open space behind the *traiteur's*. I had been watching to prevent mischief, but I came up too late, for

their coats were off and their swords crossed; and before I could get up, young De Launay lunged, and ran him through the body. But I should think the king would never suffer a pitiful lieutenant of the line to kill a man of Monsieur Victor's rank without ——"

"Order out the carriage instantly!" cried Monsieur de Langy. "Stop! I will take a fiacre.—Come with me, sirrah!" and away he rode, cast himself into the first vacant vehicle he could find, and drove with all speed to the palace.

He was immediately admitted to the presence of the king; and, casting himself at his feet, the marquis exclaimed, "I come to crave justice, sire. One of your officers has killed my son."

"I know it, Monsieur de Langy," replied the monarch; "and most sincerely and deeply do I feel for you, the more especially as in this instance I cannot act as I could wish. Your son, sir, offered a gross and flagrant insult to a young lady who deserved it not; a brother drew his sword to avenge his sister; and although I greatly disapprove of any one daring to take the law into his own hands, yet my sense of the provocation is too strong to permit of my visiting the fault with all the severity that under any other circumstances I would have shown. De Launay and his son have been here ——"

"And my cause is prejudged!" exclaimed Monsieur de Langy, rising.

"I pardon you, sir," replied the monarch; "your loss deprives you of your reason. I have banished him, sir, from Paris, and that punishment shall suffice. But I have determined to bring this system of duelling to an end altogether. The law has already put down those premeditated meetings which once disgraced our country; it is now, however, evaded upon the pretence of accidental encounters. These, too, I will stop; and therefore I give notice—mark me, gentlemen all, and make it generally known—I will never again pardon any action of this kind, be the offender whom he may. No pretence shall be available; and if one French gentleman kills another in vengeance for a private injury, the matter shall be looked upon as any other murder, and treated accordingly, from this day forth."

The marquis muttered something between his teeth; for, although he was naturally of an easy and placable disposition, the fact of his child's death was fresh upon him, and that terrible thirst of vengeance, the drop of the blood of Cain which is in all our hearts, burned in his veins, and as yet had not had time to cool. He would pursue the murderer himself, he thought; he would spill his blood as he had spilt that of him so dear. But as he drove back to his own house,

anger gave place to sorrow. He wept, and the tears softened the bitterness of his heart.

Wiping the drops away, that his servants might not perceive them, with a false sense of what is manly and becoming the bereaved father entered his dwelling amidst the silence of all around. But as he mounted the stairs to seek the chamber of his afflicted wife, Memory—obtrusive Memory, with her peculiar malice—called back a thousand images of happier days, and contrasted the hopes and the joys of the bright past with the grief and anguish of the dark present. He heard the voice of his son, as in infancy and boyhood it had prattled within those walls; he saw the sunny face of the child, and the expanding graces of the youth; he recalled a thousand traits which had touched the parental heart with emotions never to be forgotten. Everything that was bright and promising was carefully culled by the hand of Remembrance to swell his sorrow, and everything that was evil and weak was cast away.

As he approached the apartment to which Madame de Langy had been removed, he heard a voice talking to her, and concluded that a priest had been sent for; but on entering he found her leaning her head on the shoulder of Monsieur de St. Modard, and weeping calmly though bitterly.

"Speak not, my dear Adele," the viscount was saying as his nephew entered—"speak not as if you were utterly bereaved and childless. Remember, you have still a son, one every way deserving your tenderest affection. Ah, Victor! this is a terrible blow; but if you entertain that faith and religious feeling which both of you have always professed to cherish, you will derive consolation from it now."

As he himself spoke, Monsieur de St. Modard's eyes fell towards the ground. The sources of consolation which he pointed out to his nephew seemed, at a moment of sorrow and anguish like that, to acquire an importance and a depth which, in the current of an even and a prosperous life, they had never seemed to possess. Thought glanced like lightning over a thousand topics which he had lately been considering; and those longings and aspirations for immortality which, if anything be innate in the heart of man, we have every reason, from their universality, to suppose are so, made him ask himself if it were not a far grander, a far more magnificent and sublime conception to believe in the existence of one great and all-creating Spirit, filling the human breast with tender affections and kindly sympathies, and, after trying them in the fire of a disastrous and disappointing world, giving them full fruition in a brighter and purer state of being than to imagine that all things here below—the material world around us, our thoughts and feel-

ings, the pleasures of the mind, the loves of the heart—are the perishable productions of a cold, inevitable law, which calls them into being without volition or object, and leaves them to annihilation without regret or care. He shrank from the consequence of his own once-cherished doctrines, and for the first time longed to believe.

For a moment or two the words which Monsieur de Langy spoke in reply fell upon his ear unheard; but then, rousing himself, the viscount applied all his energies to console his nephew and niece under their bereavement. He was in some degree successful: thought, which had been lost in the tumultuous sensations of affliction, returned after tears had had their course; and ere night Monsieur de Langy and his wife were busied with their kind relation in making all those sad preparations which the terrible event of the day had rendered necessary. One of the first steps was to send off a courier to Auvergne, to summon Francis de Langy back to Paris with all speed.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE sad solemnities of the funeral had taken place before Francis de Langy could reach Paris, but still his meeting with his father and mother was a very painful one. In many respects he was unlike the dead: taller and far more powerful in frame, though several years younger; darker in complexion, with features more marked and manly; but still the sight of him was enough completely to upset the share of equanimity which the marquis and marchioness had regained, and to recal with poignant anguish the memory of his brother and the shock of their loss. Gradually, however, that impression wore away, and nothing remained but the consolation of his presence. They seemed to cling to him even more fondly than they had done to their eldest son; and thus parental affection, which, like a freshly transplanted shrub, had appeared to languish and fade for a day or two, revived, and bloomed brighter than ever in the new soil when once it had taken root. On his part, the hero of our tale did all that the gentle kindness of a feeling heart and a delicate mind could do to soothe and comfort his parents under their deprivation; and, though they might still experience deep regret when they thought of him who was gone, they could not but acknowledge that their surviving son was far his superior in every quality of heart and understanding.

Calm tranquillity was thus soon restored to the house of the Marquis and Marchioness de Langy; but yet in the

breast of each member of the family rested a something on which they were unwilling to fix their attention—one of those questions to be determined on which so much is staked that we fear to agitate it least our present peace should be lost. The father and mother could not but remember that they had given over their right in their son to another; that Monsieur de St. Medard had formally, and with their consent, adopted him as his own. Could they then with honour or with propriety take him from one who had been the parent and guide of his youth; and yet could they consent to part with him for such long intervals as those which had hitherto occurred in their communication with their son? This was a frequent subject of thought with both; but neither dared to speak to the other upon it, nor to suffer the viscount to see that their minds were agitated by such considerations.

Frequently, too, did Monsieur de St. Medard meditate upon the same difficult point, but another subject mingled with the current of his reflections when they turned that way. His affection for Francis de Langy was of a less selfish kind than many even of our purest attachments. The viscount could have made his mind up to resign his unquestionable claim, if by so doing he could really have benefited his adopted child; but that was what he doubted. Though he knew the good qualities of his nephew and niece, he knew their weaknesses also; and he asked himself, if their foolish indulgence had completely ruined the disposition of their eldest son, was it not likely that their daily-increasing love towards the one who was left would lead them to the same errors, and have in a degree the same effect? He was aware, indeed, that the mind of the youth whom he had brought up was originally of a firmer and stronger nature than that of his brother; he believed that the education he had received was calculated to strengthen and improve that mind; and he did not fear that Francis would ever become like the youth whose vices had brought death upon his own head and sorrow upon his parents. But he had taken a pride as well as a pleasure in forming the character of his nephew's son upon principles long considered and determinately chosen. He trusted that those principles, if followed out, would evolve all that was good in his disposition, correct all that was bad; that the flowers and the fruit of the garden would be nourished and protected, the weeds removed, and the blight destroyed. It may easily be supposed, then, that he did not like to see his plans frustrated even in a degree; that he dreaded the effect of over-tenderness even upon a character prepared, as far as the time would permit, to resist it; and although his affection towards Francis, his fondness for his

society, and the interest which he took in cultivating and directing his mind, would not have prevented him from relinquishing his right at once, yet the apprehension of injuring his adopted child himself made him pause and hesitate, and finally determine to make no absolute abandonment of the claims which he possessed. Much more important results than he foresaw hung upon his decision; and in this place I must beg the English reader to recollect, that in France the adoption of a child was regulated at that time by different rules from those established in any other country.

This question, important as it was, and affecting as a matter of course his whole future fate, though it did certainly cross the mind of Francis de Langy from time to time, was not that which occupied his attention the most. The reader may easily divine ~~what~~ it was, at least if he knows or ever has known anything of love. It was of Julie d'Artonne that he thought; and often and anxiously did he ask himself how he ought to act, ~~what~~ he ought to do. Feeling how young he was to entertain such sensations, there was a timidity, a sort of apprehension in his breast, which made him shrink from speaking of them even to Monsieur de St. Medard, with whom he was accustomed to have no concealment in regard to any of his thoughts; and yet he was afraid of trusting to the dark, capricious, uncertain future, lest some incident should supervene to destroy all his hopes for ever. He knew how early many a marriage was arranged in France; he knew, too, that very often they were decided long before, as a mere matter of business between parents, without any consultation with the parties most interested, and sometimes even without informing them. He feared, therefore, that such might be the case either with Julie d'Artonne or with himself; and he was well aware that such an engagement, once entered into either by his father or hers, would be irrevocable, and place an eternal bar between them.

On these considerations he resolved to speak of his attachment to Monsieur de St. Medard. He knew that he could trust in his affection, in his kindness, in his judgment; and although there was nothing in his adopted father's manners, demeanour, or character, no word that he had ever heard him utter, no act that he had ever seen him perform, which had in it the slightest touch of what is called romance; though he was a man of sound and practical sense, of calm, cool reasoning, displaying in all his actions thought rather than passion; still there was something, an indefinable something, which told Francis de Langy that the kind friend of his youth had at some time loved deeply, and could still feel sympathy, strong, generous, and tender, for such sensations as those in his own bosom. And yet, though day after day

he resolved to speak, he shrank from the task of telling his attachment and explaining his wishes.

As fate will often have it, whenever he had made up his mind and went to seek the viscount, Monsieur de St. Medard had gone out to the council, was busy with papers, or had some indifferent person with him; and then, when accident threw them alone together, either he could not summon resolution to introduce the subject abruptly, or some interruption took place just as he was about to commence the tale.

Thus passed on nearly three weeks. The rest of the young man's time was generally spent with some youths of high family who were studying, under an old officer of invalids some of the practical parts of the science of war. They usually met in a ground set apart for the purpose, at a distance of about four miles from Paris; and there, in forming bastions, redoubts, and field-works, and receiving instructions for their attack and defence, several hours were passed every day.

It so happened, on one of these occasions, that after the exercises of the morning were over, and the officer whose lessons they had been practising had left them, Francis de Langy with some ten or twelve of his companions stood together near the gate of the field, a number of grooms and other servants holding their horses. The day was very hot and sultry, they were all fatigued and thirsty, and Francis had sent Jean Marais to a small cabaret on the other side of the little green, to bring some wine and water to refresh them after their exertions. He had scarcely left them when an old woman in poor apparel, tall, coarse, and forbidding in appearance, and of a yellow, tanned complexion, came through the gate, and with the common whine of the race which the French call Bohemians, and which we name Gipsies, asked one of the young gentlemen to have his fortune told. The lad immediately held out his hand, and gave the woman the piece of silver she demanded, in return for which he received a very flattering account of his future performances in love and war. Several of the rest followed; and at length the fortune-teller turned to Francis de Langy, who had hitherto shown no disposition to consult her art.

"Come, my sweet young gentleman," she said; "cross my hand with silver, and I will tell you your luck. You will be a fortunate man, I am sure; I see it in your beautiful face. Why, you are taller than the rest by a head, and you will not refuse a poor Bohemian a little crown."

"Come, come, De Langy," said one of his companions, seeing him shake his head; "you are not afraid of having your fortune told, are you?"

"Oh, no," replied Francis de Langy. "I put too little

faith in the matter to be afraid. There, my good woman, is the crown for you, and there is my hand, if it please these good gentlemen to hear my fortune."

The woman pocketed the money, and then took his hand in hers, gazing steadily into the palm for a minute. The next moment she dropped it with a look of contempt, and taking out the crown again, thrust it back upon him, saying, "I did not come to tell the fortune of such as you. I came to talk with young gentlemen, not with a peasant's son. Keep your money; you will want it some day."

All his companions burst into a loud laugh; and one exclaimed, "Why, you old fool! don't you know this is the Count de Langy?"

"I don't know what he is called," replied the old woman; "but, count or no count, he is the son of a peasant;" and as she spoke she turned away and left the group of gentlemen, directing her steps towards the little cabaret which we have mentioned. Just at that moment, Jean Marais, followed by a boy carrying wine and glasses, was seen coming across towards them; and Francis de Langy exclaimed, laughing, "I have a great mind to bid my servant stop her, and make her tell me something more, as she is so learned; but I fear, Auxerre, you have spoiled the sport for to-day by telling her who I am."

"Bid him bring her back! bid him bring her back!" cried several of the others; but the woman seemed to divine their intention, for she turned shortly and quickly out of the way of Jean Marais, and took a path which led round a little garden at the back of the cabaret.

The incident which we have described produced at the time no more important effect than some laughter amongst the young men who were present. One of them advised Francis de Langy to inform the marquis that he was found out to be a peasant; another asked him jestingly to produce his letters of nobility; and the young gentleman himself seemed as much amused as any one, for he looked with too much contempt upon the woman and her tale to attach sufficient importance to the matter even for anger. When he told his father the story at dinner, however, Monsieur de Langy was highly indignant, and declared that he ought to have had the woman arrested immediately for offering such an insult to a French noble. In the capital, too, and at Versailles—there happening to be no piece of pleasant scandal, or idle gossip, or public news of great interest current at the time—the story of the Bohemian and the young Count de Langy was circulated from mouth to mouth, and supplied the place of other conversation for at least a day and a half.

On the evening following this event, however—not to lose

sight of any of the personages of our history—Jean Marais, whether amongst the servants of the house of Langy, waiting upon his master at dinner, or assisting him to undress when he went to bed, displayed a degree of thoughtful gravity not at all usual in his case. He seemed abstracted, uneasy, restless; and twice he was heard to say to himself, "Well, it is no business of mine."

At night Francis de Langy remarked the singular conduct of Jean Marais; and after having had to speak to him more than once whenever he wanted anything, he asked him in a kind manner what was the matter, adding, "You seem very sad and thoughtful to-night, Jean. Has any misfortune happened to you?"

"Oh, no, sir; not at all, not at all," replied Jean Marais. "I am as merry as a lark. Misfortune? God bless me, no! On the contrary, I fancy a cousin of mine has come into a fortune, and I was thinking of asking your permission to go into the country for two or three days to see my relations."

"By all means," said Francis de Langy. "Can I do anything else for you, Jean?"

"Well, sir," answered Jean Marais, "with an impudent man—which I hold myself to be, and thank God for it—one favour granted always begets another to be asked. May I make use of the horse that usually carries me to carry me now? It will save me a louis in conveyance, or half-a-louis in shoe-leather."

"Take him," replied Francis de Langy; "but do not override him, my good friend. Remember, though he is a strong beast, you are a heavy man."

"Ah, sir! you don't do me justice," said Jean Marais; "I have a heavy hand upon an adversary's head, but a light one upon a horse's bridle. I should certainly have liked a few words with that old woman there has been so much talk about to-day."

"Indeed!" exclaimed his master, somewhat surprised at the abruptness with which he introduced the subject; "what can you want with her?"

"Oh! to have my fortune told, of course," replied Jean Marais with a laugh: "I expect to turn out a very great man some of these days."

"Why, you are not foolish enough to suppose she could tell you anything about your fortune?" rejoined his master.

"I don't know, sir," answered the valet: "she said one very true thing to-day, if she said no more."

"And pray what was that?" demanded Francis de Langy, his surprise not diminished.

Jean Marais paused a moment ere he replied, but then answered with a low bow, "She assured you that you were a

very fortunate gentleman, I am told, the moment she looked at you; and that you will certainly admit is very true. First, you have an excellent father, who is very fond of you; so you are lucky in that. Then you are lucky in an excellent mother, and an uncle as good as either; lucky too in fortune, rank, figure, health, disposition; and also in having the very best valet-de-chambre that was ever born and educated, in the person of your most humble and obedient servant, Jean Marais."

"Well, well," said Francis de Langy, laughing; "you are right in all the first particulars you have mentioned, and I trust you will prove yourself right in the last also; so now good night to you. Tell one of the other servants to take your place for the time being, and let him call me early to-morrow, for I wish to catch my uncle before he goes out."

Thus saying, Francis de Langy retired to repose, like all the rest of the world, in happy ignorance of the events which were coming rapidly forward out of the dark future to alter the whole complexion of his fate. Every man, when he lays down his head upon his pillow to rest, has a volcano underneath him. It may remain still and tranquil during his slumber; for hours, for days, for months, for years, it may show nothing but peace, and calm prosperity may stretch around; but it may wake him ere morning with the lava or the earthquake, and burn up the harvest of his hopes, or scatter the vineyard of his fortunes to the wind.

CHAPTER XX.

WE must return, dear reader, to a spot which we have abandoned for many years, and to persons whom we have not seen for some time; but we go back with none of those feelings of affection wherewith one revisits the scenes of one's youth, with none of those warm and kindly associations which the memories of happiness enjoyed are sure to produce. In returning after long absence to the home of our early years, we may, it is true, find ourselves disappointed; a part of the brightness is almost sure to have passed away, and our eyes are changed, even if the things they looked upon have remained the same. The persons whom we loved, too, are sure to have altered, and rarely for the better; for, even if they be still upon the bright side of life, the rosebud is generally more beautiful than the rose; and if they be on the autumnal side of the hill, we shall have to mark many a leaf that has fallen, many a flower that has faded away.

In going back, however, to the Ferme Godard, neither have we ourselves any great interest in the place or the people, nor, to say the truth, had Jean Marais. Neverthe-

less, he judged it necessary to visit the home of his youth, dear reader; and, as we do not feel ourselves to be competent to censure his conduct or restrain his actions, we too must follow him thither, to see what he was about.

It was hot summer weather, as the reader well knows, and Jean Marais thought—he was a very reasonable and calculating gentleman—that it would be much cooler both for himself and his horse if he made his little expedition by night, rather than in the day-time; and accordingly, within two hours after he left the bed-room of Francis de Langy, he was going soberly along the road in a direction varying from north-west to north-west-and-by-west. As nothing in the world happened to him except his horse getting a stone in its shoe at the distance of five leagues from Paris, we shall not dwell upon the events of his journey, till, at about half-past eight o'clock in the morning, he rode out of the little village which was seen from the farm-house, and took his way slowly up the hill. Although the recollections of childhood in the breast of Jean Marais were not full of unmixed pleasure, and the sweeter parts were altogether connected with himself; although he had lost his parents early, and had fallen to the care of Gerard Latouches, who, to say the truth, was not the kindest of cousins; although he had been put to labour as soon as his hands were capable of work, with a harsh and suspicious master, who gave every encouragement that distrust and severity can afford to make a servant outwit him he serves; yet, as Jean Marais rode along and looked round upon the scenes of his early years, he could not but experience some of that melting tenderness which seldom, if ever, fails to rise in the heart of man when any circumstance, either of sight or sound, recalls in a more tangible and vivid form a period of comparative innocence and gentleness of feeling. Memory brings its own light with it; but that light, which like the lustre of the moon is a reflected one, partakes the character of the period from which it flows. When we look back in our latter day towards the joyous activity and energy of first manhood, the evening seems to be brightened for a moment by the splendour of noon, and when, in the full summer-day of maturity, we pant under the heat of our passions and the excitement of strife and endeavour, the calm, fresh gleam of the morning appears to fall refreshing upon our hearts as soon as we turn our eyes to the softer hours of childhood.

Such feelings took possession of the hero of this chapter as he went on towards the farm, but they did not hold him long, and his mind speedily resumed its ordinary habits. Now, the mind of Jean Marais, dear reader, was a very peculiar one: an active, eager, bustling intellect, which was

always busy about something, inquiring, finding out, setting to rights, arranging its goods and chattels, or bartering them against those of other people with a great degree of sagacity and shrewdness. There are as great differences in the demeanour and conduct of the mind as in the character and bearing of the outward man. Indeed, the fleshly creature seems but the corporeal type of the thinner essence which is boxed up within each of us; and just as there are slow and sluggish frames which move with difficulty and unwillingness, busy and bustling bodies that are always in a state of fuss and locomotion, graceful and beautiful forms, that, whether in activity or repose, present themselves in sweet and agreeable attitudes, active and powerful shapes which require robust exertion and energy as the natural result of their structure, so have we minds possessing precisely the same qualities, and exhibiting themselves precisely under the same aspects. It does not at all follow, indeed, that the body should represent the mind that is within it. In truth, alas! the contrary is frequently the case; and I have often been tempted to think—and might have given way to the temptation, too, had not revelation put a bar to the vagaries of fancy—that, according to some heathen superstition, the bodies and minds of men were originally made separately, like an instrument and a case, and were then laid by, to be put together as they might be needed. Going a little farther still, I could have fancied that in this sort of arrangement it was not judged of much importance which spirit was put into which case; so that a very fine instrument was not unfrequently found in a coarse, inconvenient, or damaged cover.

Such was in some degree the case with Jean Marais; that is to say, his corporeal and mental qualities were very different. Strong, powerful, and active he certainly was in frame; but no one would have imagined, from his somewhat light and careless demeanour, that his mind was so thoughtful and busy as it was, especially at those moments when his limbs and muscles were in the most quiet and tranquil state. Had the outward and inward man acted together, our friend Jean could not have gone up the hill at the slow and sauntering pace with which he proceeded; for his fancy was employed with a thousand different inquiries, and was flying from one point to another with a rapidity truly marvellous.

As he came nearer to the Ferme Godard, however, he laid by speculation and took to observation. The first thing that struck him was a look of great improvement and an increased neatness about the building and all that lay around it. His cousin had evidently prospered in the world, and Jean Marais remarked it with a smile. He did not in the least wish Gerard Latouches any evil; he was not sorry to

see his fortunes improve; but, if the truth must be told, he had considerable doubts as to the means by which that improvement had been effected. He had no great confidence, in short, in the peculiar honesty of his cousin; and he had some cause, to say sooth, to doubt Gerard Latouches' mode of acquisition.

Riding up to the house, he entered a farm-yard which had lately been added and enclosed with walls; and, tying his horse to a ring which was fixed in the side of the house, he opened the door quietly and went in. The first person his eyes fell upon was a maid-servant, an appendage which the farm now owned; and he was about to ask for his relations when Marguerite Latouches herself came out of the back-room, and for a moment seemed scarcely to recollect him, though perhaps he was less changed than she was herself. He had indeed become a stout, powerful man, instead of a tall, well-grown boy; but a very different sort of alteration had taken place in her appearance. In the first place, she had completely lost the smart air of the lady's-maid, and had sunk down in dress and character into the small farmer's wife. In the next place, every vestige of beauty was gone; the pretty girl had become the plain woman, brown, and somewhat shrivelled with time, exposure, labour, and care; but the saddest change of all was from health to sickness. There was still some colour in the face, it is true; but that colour centred in one small spot in either cheek, and the rest was all sallow and sickly. The lips were pale and bloodless, the features sharp and thin, and there was moreover a look of anxious thought, as if something were pressing continually upon her mind.

As soon as she recognised her husband's cousin, Marguerite Latouches welcomed him with a faint smile, but told him at the same time that Latouches was absent. "He has been away five days now," she said.

"I thought so," replied Jean Marais, much to her surprise. "Pray, where is your son?"

"He is at school," answered Marguerite Latouches; "Gerard is bringing him up for a lawyer."

"For a lawyer!" repeated Jean Marais; "that is an honest profession. But what hope has he in making the young man a lawyer? He can but be an *avoué*, or a notary; and without some relation in that line a peasant's son will never get on."

"Ay, but you forget," said Margaret, "that your cousin Martin, Gerard's brother, is intendant to Monsieur de Langy, and can do a great deal for him. But come, Jean; you must break bread in the house, though you seem to have grown a very fine gentleman. What will you take?"

"Nothing but a cup of water with a dash o' wine in it," replied Jean Marais; and then added abruptly, "I should have liked to see your son."

"Thank you, thank you, Jean," answered Marguerite; "you were always kind to the boys, and I used to say you had a good heart, though a wild head."

"I should have liked to see him," repeated Jean Marais; "I want to know which of his family he is like, Marguerite."

At that moment the good woman turned away to get a glass out of the cupboard; and Jean Marais added, in the same sort of abrupt manner in which he had before spoken, "I always thought your husband had great intentions for his son."

Margaret turned and looked at him steadily, while the bright colour came up into her sallow cheek. There seemed to be a struggle in her mind as to whether she should reply or not, and after a momentary pause she said, "Jean Marais, some day or another ——"

But just at that moment a horse trotted rapidly up to the front of the farm, and with a nervous look in that direction she hastened to draw some wine from a barrel, leaving the sentence uncompleted. The next instant the door opened, and Gerard Latouches entered, looking round him for the guest whose horse he had seen standing without. Jean Marais sat still, gazing at him with an unconcerned air, and an expression of countenance which might be translated, "Here I am! how do you like me?" but it was evidently by a great effort of memory that Gerard recollected his cousin.

"On my life," he cried at length, "I believe it is that worthless scapegrace, Jean Marais!"

"No other, if you will believe me," said Jean Marais with the utmost *nonchalance*: "I do not wonder at your not knowing me, Gerard; I am very much changed in all things since I left you. I have got to a new school, and have turned an honest man."

"Then the philosopher's stone has been discovered!" cried Gerard Latouches; "for nothing but a transmutation of metals could do that."

"Why, it is true, I am your first cousin," replied Jean Marais, "and they say what is bred in the bone will never go out of the flesh; but still I am trying to be as honest as the bad blood in my veins will let me."

"Then be so good as to pay me the ten louis which you stole out of my table when you went away," exclaimed the farmer, "or I will have you taken up for robbery."

Jean Marais laughed. "Come, come, Gerard," he said; "thou always wert the most impudent of men, and how I come to be so modest I cannot tell, considering I was brought

up by you. Answer me one question, Gerard Latouches: did you not pocket everything my father left when he died? Did you not sell the two cows, and the horse and cart, and the field, and the furniture, and the house? I only helped myself to a part of my own; and if we come to reckon, I think you will have to put your hand in your purse."

"Who fed and clothed you, and placed you at school for three years?" asked Gerard Latouches. "You cost me much more than ever you brought, and were always in mischief from the time you were twelve years old."

"Will you go into an account before a notary?" asked Jean Marais.

"Stuff and nonsense!" answered his cousin. "Besides, if there were a few louis more or less, you had no right to break open the drawer. You could be marked on the shoulder for that."

He spoke much more diffidently, however, than he had done at the beginning, and in the end he thought it better to change the conversation, saying, "Well, where did you get all your fine feathers, and your horse? Have you been plucking some young gull, or robbing on the highway?"

"Neither, my good friend," replied Jean Marais, who well knew all the little intricacies of his cousin's character, and was aware that, amongst other not very singular opinions, he held wealth to be virtue and poverty to be vice; "neither: you mistake my position altogether. I hold a capital situation, which fills my purse and covers my back; and all that I have got to say is, that if you have any claim upon me whatsoever, and are ready to enter into an account with me, I will discharge my debt in a moment, be it what it may."

Thus speaking, he put his hand into his pocket, and drew forth a well-filled leathern purse, much to the surprise and admiration not only of Gerard, but of his wife, neither of whom could by any effort of imagination conceive how he could have possessed himself of so much wealth.

"No, no, Jean," replied Gerard, who was not at all fond of entering into the reckoning which his cousin talked of; "let the past be the past. I forgive your breaking open the drawer with all my heart, and as to the money, it is no matter. I never thought to see you again, and so I kept no account. —But what is this situation you have got? I should like to hear.

A moment's consideration made Jean Marais resolve not to tell his worthy cousin what was the nature of his employment, and by whom he was employed, although he was well aware that, sooner or later, Gerard, from his connection with the house of Langy, would find out the facts for himself.

"You will excuse me, Master Gerard," he said: "my situa-

tion is one of trust and confidence, and I think it better not to mention anything about it. Thank you, Marguerite," he continued, taking up the glass of wine and water which she had placed on the table before him; "here's to your health! Gerard, your health! I must be going."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed Gerard; "you must stay and take a bit of dinner with us. My wife will put a fowl in the pot, and we will have a merry meal of it. Your horse looks tired, too; we will have him round to the stable. How far has he come this morning?"

Jean Marais would not give the slightest indication of his place of abode, and simply replied, "A good many leagues." In the matter of dinner, indeed, he suffered himself to be prevailed upon, staying an hour or two, for the purpose of gaining rather than affording information. From Gerard Latouches very little was to be obtained, that worthy gentleman not having received from Nature a communicative disposition. Small signs and symptoms, however, to an inquiring eye very often discover great truths; and amongst other matters which Jean Marais perceived was the fact, that poor Marguerite stood in awe of her husband to a degree that could only be produced by great severity on his side. Everything like love appeared to be out of the question between them. She had expressed no satisfaction at his return, nor he any pleasure at seeing her again; and though, like a slave, she hastened to obey his lightest word, the anxious glance of her eye showed that it was the obedience of fear, and not of affection. Various other little particulars became apparent to the keen scrutiny of Jean Marais; and before he left the house he was tolerably well satisfied in regard to several questions on which he was doubtful when he entered their doors. As soon as the meal was over he took his leave, and left his relations, with some pity for the wife, but no great reverence for the husband.

Such feelings would have been not a little increased, could Jean Marais have seen the events which occurred immediately after his departure. Gerard Latouches waited till the sound of his horse's feet died away; but the moment that such was the case, the husband opened a drawer in the old walnut commode which stood near, and took out a paper covered with writing on two sides. His wife watched him with a look of fear and anxiety, and, on his turning round and approaching her, seemed ready to sink into the earth.

"You shall sign the confession, woman," said Gerard Latouches, "whether you like it or not. I don't mean that I will use it, but have it in my own hands I will."

"I told you before," answered Marguerite in a low voice, "that I will never do it. If you kill me I will not."

"We will see," replied Gerard Latouches, and at the same time he struck her a blow on the side of the head with his open hand, which made her reel and well-nigh fall.

"Now will you sign it?" cried her husband.

"No!" she replied, bursting into tears and casting herself into a chair. "If you touch me again, I will scream till the people hear."

"Let them," said Gerard Latouches; and once more he struck her as she sat, more severely than before.

Marguerite uttered a long and piercing shriek, and then began coughing violently. In an instant her mouth filled with blood, and the cough continuing, every effort brought up more, apparently from the lungs. Gerard Latouches was now alarmed; and, calling to some of the labourers, he sent them instantly down to the village, in which by this time a surgeon had established himself, to do those offices for the sick which in former days the good priest of the place had performed with little less skill than himself. The son of Esculapius soon arrived, and heard from Marguerite herself the ill-treatment Gerard had given her; for with natural indignation she was not at all unwilling to show that her husband had been instrumental in killing her. The surgeon, who had attended her for some time for a complaint in the chest, and who had a reverence for all the rich farmers in the neighbourhood, declared that the blows she had received in the face could not have ruptured a vessel in the lungs, and consequently that her own screaming must have produced that result. Nothing he could do, however, seemed to stop or even to diminish the pouring out of blood; and drawing Gerard Latouches aside, he informed him that his wife would not see the next morning.

"That is very unfortunate," replied Gerard Latouches in a very indifferent tone, "for I must absolutely return to Paris to-night. If you have got anything else to do, my good friend, go and do it, and then come back and attend upon her while I am absent. But are you perfectly sure that she will die?"

The surgeon informed him that there was not the slightest hope of her surviving; and Gerard, after having seen him depart, returned to his wife's chamber, and remained with her in conversation for nearly an hour, notwithstanding an injunction to keep her as quiet as possible. The surgeon brought back with him, two or three hours after, both a sick-nurse and the priest, the latter of whom was received by the farmer with a very sad and woe-begone countenance. He declared his deep regret that he was obliged to leave his poor Marguerite under such circumstances; but, on mounting his horse and riding away from the door, the clouds passed off

very soon from his face, and any one who had marked it accurately might have seen a strong inclination to laugh curling his lip.

CHAPTER XXI.

FRANCIS DE LANGY was disappointed in seeing his uncle on the day after Jean Marais' departure. Monsieur de St. Medard had gone out before his nephew arrived, and during the whole day he did not visit the Hôtel de Langy, where the young gentleman had taken up his abode on reaching Paris. The next morning, however, as his adopted son was sitting in his own room about an hour before breakfast, calculating whether it would not be better to speak to the marquis at once on the subject of his wishes, rather than wait in order to trust the communication to his uncle, Monsieur de St. Medard himself opened the door and came in.

"I am glad to find you alone, Francis," he said, taking a chair which his nephew placed for him: "there are two matters on which I wish to speak to you, and on one of which, my dear boy, I think you have wished to speak with me, yet seem to have hesitated to do so. In the first place, then, let me advise you, Francis, with those whom you love and respect, never let timidity prevent you from going straightforward to the point regarding anything that you desire. Mental courage is as necessary to a man as corporeal courage: they are the two great guardians of truth; and when you have well considered a matter, and have made up your mind that it is right to do it or to say it, have no hesitation in putting your resolution into execution, nor attempt to prepare the way by any preliminaries, except such explanations as are absolutely necessary."

"I was doubtful, my dear uncle," replied Francis, the colour somewhat high in his cheek, "whether it was really right and necessary to do that which I wished to do."

"I am not blaming you, my dear boy," said his uncle, "but giving you advice for the future—two very different things. But to the point. You are now an only son; and my belief is, that although you are too young at present, according to the customs of the world, to marry, your father will wish to form an alliance for you as soon as possible. My wishes in that matter will go with his for various reasons. In the first place, one cannot altogether free one's mind from prejudices which have been instilled into him early, and every man in our station of life desires to see the house to which he belongs carried on by direct heirs. It is a foolish inclination, perhaps, and has no very reasonable foundation; but still I must feel with the world in this respect, and should be sorry

to see the honours and estates of the house pass away to remote kinsmen of whom we know little or nothing. In the next place, I am a great advocate for early marriages, where both parties have been educated in the principles of virtue and honour. I look upon a man's attachment to a woman who deserves it as the greatest possible safeguard to him in his dealings with the world: it keeps him from all those small vices which unfettered youth thinks little of, but which certainly, though slowly, undermine the foundations of better things, till in the end the whole fabric of right and wrong gives way under the assault of temptation. I myself owe more in life than you can imagine to an early and honourable though unrequited affection. Now, from your conduct and demeanour towards Mademoiselle d'Artonne, I am inclined to believe that a union with her would not be disagreeable to you."

"I love her more than any being upon earth," replied Francis de Langy.

"I am glad of it," said his uncle, "for I think she is worthy of your love; and I am not the least offended, my dear boy, at your not making any exception in my favour in regard to the exclusive attachment you profess for her; for Nature never intended that man should love any other human being with the same devotion which he must feel towards her who is to be the companion of his whole existence. I am glad of it in another respect, too: because I think that, merely in a worldly point of view, the alliance is one which your father would himself desire, and because I also know that there will be no obstacle on the part of Monsieur d'Artonne. That fact I had already ascertained before your brother's death; and if he did not object when your position was much less favourable, he certainly will throw no impediment in the way under existing circumstances."

It may easily be conceived that such intelligence gave extraordinary joy to a bosom full of the warm enthusiasms and eager affections of early youth. A thousand dark apprehensions and misgivings had hung between the eyes of Francis de Langy and the future, making him fearful to look upon it. He had fancied that his father might object, or even Monsieur de St. Medard himself; that Monsieur d'Artonne might oppose; that the hand of Julie might even be promised to another; or, at the best, that all parties might treat his attachment coldly on account of his youth, and interpose long delays to chill the eager hopes of love. Such apprehensions, however, were now all swept away in an instant. It was as if a dark and sombre curtain had been suddenly removed, and one scene of unclouded brightness and splendour opened before him as his future prospect. The premature of age

almost always chills more or less the fire of youth. Had Francis de Langy been alone, he might have given way to almost any sort of joyous extravagance to vent the exuberance of his satisfaction. A young man is not worth much who could not jump over a chair or a table when he is very happy, just to expend a part of the superfluous excitement. But Monsieur de St. Medard being present, Francis de Langy restrained himself, and only kissed his uncle's hand warmly to show his gratitude and his joy.

"Well, well, my dear boy," said the viscount; "I see you are satisfied with the arrangement I propose; and therefore, without a word more, I will go down and speak to your father about it. Stay here, and I will let you know the result."

There is in the human mind a want of faith in happiness, which I believe is inherent, not acquired. What we long for we tremble for; and even the child snatching at the fruit or flower has fear in his eagerness as well as desire. We know, without being taught, that everything on this earth is mortal, and that of all mortal things joy is the most frail. The moment his uncle was gone, the feeling of apprehension again took possession of the heart of Francis de Langy. He knew of no cause for dread, and yet he dreaded that some unforeseen obstacle might still intervene. He was not long kept in suspense, however; for the viscount was not gone five minutes, and his air and manner on his return at once showed that all was as he could have wished it.

"Your father is delighted, Francis," said Monsieur de St. Medard, "and your mother not less so. Go to them, my dear boy, and then make preparations for a journey. It is determined you shall be your own ambassador; and as you have selected your future bride yourself, contrary to all our absurd precedents in this country, you must even ask her hand of her father also."

At an early hour on the following morning Francis de Langy was concluding his preparations for his new expedition to Auvergne, aided by the servant who had supplied Jean Marais' place during his leave of absence, when suddenly the worthy valet himself entered the room, exclaiming in grief and astonishment—

"Going to Auvergne, sir, and I am not going with you!"

"Why, my good Jean," replied Francis de Langy, "I have business of importance to transact, and could not wait for you."

"Wait!" cried Jean Marais; "I am ready this moment, sir. You can never go to Auvergne without me. Is not a real, genuine, unadulterated valet-de-chambre as much a part of his master's person and identity as his right leg, with-

out which he cannot walk, but only hobble? I will answer for it, sir, that if you were to set out for Auvergne without me, you would get into some scrape in two minutes, from which no one could extricate you but myself; and in taking me with you, as I fully intend you shall, you will find cause every hour of the day to thank the lucky stars that furnished you with Jean Marais. What is a gentleman without a valet-de-chambre, indeed?"

Francis de Langy laughed gaily, with a heart so full of its own gladness that everything else seemed of minor importance; and, leaving the other man and Jean Marais to settle the matter between them as to which should accompany him, he saw it speedily arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, the lacquey being quite as much pleased to remain in Paris as Jean was to journey into Auvergne.

Ere half-an-hour was over, Francis de Langy's post-chaise rolled out of the *porte cochère* of his father's house, and was soon on the road to Clermont. If thou shouldst ever be in Paris, reader, and be either enchanted by its gaieties, fascinated by its pleasures, deluded by its apparent wit, philosophy, and energy, or attached to it too strongly by any of the bonds of the heart or the head, and on leaving it shouldst desire a brush wherewith to sweep away every feeling of regret from thy mind, go out slowly by the Faubourg St. Marceau; let the sight of its filth and squalor, its crowded abominations and uncheerful horrors, be thy last remembrance of Paris; and, if ever thou dost wish to see it again, thou must have a strong stomach or a bad memory. Now-a-days one can avoid that faubourg, on whatever road one travels; but at the time I speak of there was no possibility of getting to Moulins without passing through it; and as the postilion jogged on slowly over its rough and jolting pavement, Francis de Langy thought he would never get to the end of sights displeasing to the eye and smells offensive to the nose. But when they issued forth under Menilmontant, and passed through Villejuif, where there was no post at that time, the postilion did not seem to go any faster or the road to be less tedious. Alas! that the wings of the little blind god, though he sometimes uses them swiftly enough to fly away with himself, should never be of any service to his votaries, even when most eager to proceed upon their way! On went the post-chaise at its own pace, notwithstanding all the wishes of Francis de Langy: Fromenteau, Essonne, Ponthierry, Chailly, Fontainebleau, one by one were reached; and such was the rate of progression in that day, that by the time the carriage rolled into Nemours it was quite dark. Onward, however, the young gentleman travelled till he arrived at Montargis, by which time he had received conclusive proof

that the attempt to make much way during the night was of very little use, and tended much more to wear out his patience than to accelerate his journey. At each of the two post-houses between Nemours and the last-mentioned place he was kept waiting an hour before the people of the place were roused and the horses put to; and as he came into Montargis itself, the town-clock was striking two in the morning, though he was yet less than eighty miles from Paris.

The next day the same took place, and the next again; and the feelings of Francis de Langy were only changed, inasmuch as, when at the end of the third he stopped at Moulins, he was within twenty-one leagues of the dwelling of her he loved. Those twenty-one leagues, however, though in general not what can be called mountainous, were difficult to travel; the road was not the best in the world; the horses were by no means super-excellent, and the people somewhat slow. As Francis de Langy knew this by experience, he was in his carriage at sunrise, and perhaps might have reached the Chateau d'Artonne by daylight, had not the postilion taken it into his head to drive furiously across a gutter in the little town of Gannet; which proceeding dexterously broke the axle of the carriage at the precise spot most convenient for mending it, opposite to the forge of a blacksmith, who, it was remarked by the people of the town, had always strongly opposed any alteration of the gutter which ran across the highway.

About fifty yards farther on there was a little auberge or cabaret, kept by a cousin of the postilion; and thither Francis de Langy naturally bent his steps, and spent an hour in taking his dinner while the axle of the carriage was being mended. That operation took up at least an hour and a half, and thus the sun had just set when he reached Riom.

Do you remember, reader, having walked with us up a hill not far beyond that city, and through a path in the wood which led to a fountain? If you do, you will also call to mind that Francis de Langy there beheld, for the first time, the beautiful being whom he was now going to seek as his bride. Just as he reached the bottom of the ascent on the present occasion, the moon, which had been somewhat hidden, either by the clouds or the hills, I know not well which, shone out bright and clear; and at the same moment the postilion pulled up his horses and asked if monsieur liked to walk up the hill. Francis very willingly agreed to do so; and at the entrance of the little path which he had formerly pursued, his heart full of the memories of that meeting, he turned away to the left, enjoying at every step the thrilling pleasures of association. He smiled as he recollected how

free and easy was his breast when first he trod that little meandering footway, how little he had expected that any incident would occur to beget such a complete change of feeling in his heart; and then he thought of her he loved, and of how beautiful she had looked as she lay senseless upon the path before him; and he called up the glance which she had given around as recollection returned, and the first meeting of his eyes with hers.

Memory might pause for a moment, too, upon all that was strange and unexplained in the events of that day; but his heart was too full of love to permit thoughts of any other kind to hold it long, and he walked on dreaming of Julie d'Artonne. As he went, the moonlight seemed still to keep him company; for though the path, as we have shown, took many bends round the sweeps of the hill, yet the bright planet was so high that she either shone out full upon his way, or poured her rays in wavering spots of light through the brown leaves and branches overhead.

As the young gentleman was approaching the little fountain, however, he heard a sound as if some one had thrown down a quantity of tools or instruments of husbandry, followed by voices speaking in a low, grave tone. He suddenly stopped, for the usual hour of work was past, the labourer retired from the field, the woodman gone home to his cottage; and Francis then perceived for the first time that Jean Marais was close behind him.

"What is going on, Jean?" he said in a whisper.

"Perhaps some poachers," answered the man; "and if it be, we had better go on and take no heed."

"Perhaps we had," replied Francis de Langy; and he accordingly walked slowly and quietly forward, for ten or a dozen steps, to a place where the path became more open, crossing a space of about twenty yards in breadth and forty in length, where some trees had been cut down on the hill-side, leaving behind them a patch of underwood here and there, while the rest of the ground was covered with long forest-grass. On the left hand the hill declined somewhat abruptly; and beyond the opening the trees rose tall and thin, with a few shrubs and plants beneath them, not thick enough to deserve the name of underwood.

Here again Francis de Langy suddenly stopped, for there was another light besides that of the moon, and the persons from whom the voices proceeded were partly visible at no great distance. They were gathered together just below the path, and were some twelve or fourteen in number. As they stood at different distances down the descent, the heads and shoulders of some, the heads of others, and nearly the whole form of one or two, were visible. The latter was the case

with a tall man, dressed in the garb of the *maréchaussée*, who held a torch in his hand, with the flaming end somewhat bent down. There seemed to be another flambeau, if not more, below, by the red light and smoke which came up, drowning in a gloomy and portentous glare the pure, cold beams of the moon.

After gazing for a moment, Francis de Langy fancied that he recognised more than one of the persons before him; and at all events his curiosity was too highly excited to permit of his proceeding without ascertaining what they were about. Without any attempt at concealment, then, but with a quiet step, he advanced through the grass to the spot where the group was assembled, followed as he did so by Jean Marais. Their approach caused little observation; one of the men turning round his head, looking at them slightly, and then resuming the steadfast gaze with which he had been previously contemplating the proceedings of another personage, who with mattock and pickaxe was beginning to dig by the light of the torches held above his head.

What they were seeking the two new-comers could not divine; but it was now clear, not only that the business was of importance, but that Francis de Langy was right in supposing several of those there assembled to be well known to him. Close to the person who was digging stood the intendant, his arms crossed upon his chest, and a red roquelaure cast over his shoulders to keep him from the night-air. He was looking on with his usual calm, cold, impenetrable expression of countenance, steadily, but not anxiously, as one might be supposed to witness a proceeding which excited nothing but mere curiosity. A little nearer to Francis de Langy, but with his back turned towards him, stood the Count d'Artonne. It was evident, from the attitude which he had assumed, that he was gazing at the proceedings with strong interest, though his face could not be seen. One or two of his servants were there also, as well as the Préfet of the neighbouring town, who had been pointed out to Francis de Langy during his former visit to Auvergne. The rest of the party comprised two or three labourers, and some servants and officers of the intendant, with several agents of the police, and no less than four servants in the livery of Madame de Bausse. In the front was the large dog which we have mentioned as accompanying that lady on her visit to the house of the intendant, which now stood with drooping ears and tail, the mouth partly open, and the tongue hanging out, watching the process of digging, and every now and then running forward, and attempting to aid the men who were employed, by scratching eagerly with his feet.

The scene altogether was a curious and a solemn one. All

were now silent, and the only sounds which broke the stillness were the strokes of the mattock and an occasional low whine from the dog. The sensations of Francis de Langy were by no means pleasant: a cold chill seemed cast over his bright expectations; vague and uncomfortable images rose up before his fancy, and connected the present with many events of the past. He remembered that it was close to that very spot where he had found Julie d'Artonne in a state of insensibility; he recalled the sudden and unexplained disappearance of Monsieur de Bausse; and, he knew not why, his mind would join those events with that which was at present going on, and that in a painful manner. He too stood and watched the labourers with a feeling of awe and apprehension, as one gazes at a dark thunder-cloud which is ready every moment to burst upon us. In the mean while the men worked on, removing shovelful after shovelful of earth, till at length the mattock struck the rock, without their discovering anything.

"Work on in this direction," said the intendant; "you have begun too much towards the hill. Let the dog be your guide."

"We shall come upon the water, Monseigneur," replied one of the men; "the stream from the fountain comes down there."

"Do as you are ordered," replied the intendant; and the workmen proceeded, moving from the spot in which they had been digging, two or three feet to the right.

The first shovelfuls which they threw up in this place were of a dark sort of earth mixed with some volcanic stones, loose and easily moved. They then came to some leaves thickly packed together, and moist with the water of the stream, which, oozing through them, passed under the surface of the ground from the basin of the fountain above, to join the stream down below. Two spadefuls were cast out, and then the intendant suddenly exclaimed,

"Stop! what did you touch there?"

"Nothing, I think, but the packed leaves, monseigneur," replied the man.

Monsieur d'Artonne stepped a little forward, and said—it seemed to Francis de Langy, not without a considerable effort—"Better scrape the leaves away gently: they must have been placed there, as the earth is above them."

His voice was low and hollow; and as he spoke, the dog, which one of the servants had taken by the collar, broke away, and scratched up the leaves with his feet.

The next instant some cloth, apparently the sleeve of a man's coat, was discovered; and the intendant exclaimed, "Hold the torch! hold the torch! Here is the body! Take

away the dog; remove the earth and leaves gently; let us see exactly how he lies."

Quickly and in silence the men proceeded with their work, casting off the earth and the wet leaves on either side, and in less than a minute they came to the hilt of a sword, upon which one of them was stooping down to pull it out from the mass that covered the blade, but the intendant stopped him, exclaiming suddenly, "Do not touch it! Remove the rubbish from it with the spade; it is necessary to see whether it be drawn or not."

Very little labour was necessary to prove the fact: the sword was unsheathed, and quite rusty, seeming to have been thrown in after the body had been deposited in its unconsecrated grave. When it was all clear, the intendant took it from the hands of the workmen, and examined it by the torchlight, while every one gazed on him and it in deep silence and with a contracted brow.

"Go on," said the intendant, and the work was resumed.

In about three minutes more the whole of a human body was exposed to view; but the little stream, trickling on through the leaves, formed with the disturbed earth a muddy pool around the corpse, which prevented anything from being seen, except that it was lying on the side, with the face towards the hill.

The body was easily raised, however, and being placed upon the open ground, a torch was held close to the face. To the surprise of all, not the slightest appearance of corruption was visible. It would seem that the stream of water, either from some peculiar quality in itself, or from the extreme coldness of its temperature, had entirely preserved the corpse from decay, so that the features were as perfect as at the moment when death set his seal upon them. They were those of a young and somewhat handsome man, well-formed, though not particularly prepossessing. The countenance seemed to retain a certain degree of expression, which was probably more the accidental one which it bore, at the moment of death than that which was habitual to it. The brow was contracted, the teeth were set firmly, and the corners of the mouth drawn down. The right hand had a glove upon it, the left had none, but one was found under the body. The clothes were rich and expensive; there were rings upon the fingers, and the chain of a watch was apparent, with several large seals. No hat was found, and the sheath of the sword was doubled up underneath him, and somewhat broken.

"Do any of you recognise this man?" demanded the intendant.

"I do," replied the Count d'Artonne at once: "it is the late Marquis de Bausse."

"I do!" "I do!" cried several of the persons present.

"Now, then, let us see how he came by his death," the intendant continued. "There is no appearance of blood that I can see."

"It must have been washed away by the water," observed some one.

"Open his coat," said the intendant; and on so doing, right in the midst of the breast was discovered a small round wound, scarcely large enough to admit the point of a man's finger; but spreading from it on every side like a halo was a deep blue and yellow bruise.

"Well," said the intendant, after they had all gazed for a moment or two in silence, "two facts are evident. This is the corpse of Monsieur de Bausse, which we have at length found; and he has met with a violent death. Monsieur d'Artonne, I must trust to you to convey this intelligence as delicately as you can to Madame de Bausse, for I intend myself to proceed immediately to Riom, carrying the body with me. I hope, too, my dear friend, that to-morrow you will give me your assistance in the investigations which it will be necessary for me to institute in order to discover the perpetrator of this deed."

"Undoubtedly," replied Monsieur d'Artonne. "At what time shall I be with you to-morrow?"

"At ten," said the intendant, "if you can make it convenient;" and some more conversation of no importance took place regarding the arrangements for the next day and the method of bearing the corpse to Riom.

Francis de Laugy, however, waited not to hear it. He felt sick and gloomy: a deeper impression was made upon him, he knew not why, than the mere sight of the dead body could have occasioned; and turning away he resumed the path towards the high road without speaking a word to any one. Absorbed in what was going on, no one noticed his departure any more than his arrival; and when he cast himself into the chaise he covered his eyes with his hands, but it was long before he could turn his thoughts away from the painful channel into which they had been directed.

CHAPTER XXII.

In this chapter, reader, we will endeavour to fly with the wings of the wind—though, perhaps, we had better say with the wings of the butterfly. But this is a chapter of young joy, which is always eager and rapid, passing like a flash; and the butterfly is the image of calm happiness, sporting in its garden of flowers, and fluttering, half-sated in the wantonness of fruition, from sweet to sweet ere each be fully tasted.

The meeting of Francis de Langy, on the night of which we have already spoken, with Julie d'Artonne, with her father and with her mother, was somewhat chequered with gloom. The scene he had witnessed had cast a shadow over his own mind; it had done so still more over that of Monsieur d'Artonne; and, judging that the count might wish to communicate with his family in private, Francis soon after his arrival proceeded to the chamber of the Abbé Arnoux, whom he found very slowly advancing towards recovery. The good old man was quite contented with his progress, however; he had been up for an hour during each of the two days preceding, and he thanked God for the relief afforded him, with the humble gratitude of an earnest and pious heart.

The next morning beamed more brightly; the impressions of the night before had been softened in the mind of the young lover; and on going down he found Monsieur d'Artonne also with a more cheerful face. While speaking with him at the foot of the stairs, a servant brought in a letter from the intendant; and in reading it a well-pleased smile came upon the count's lip. Francis de Langy thought the moment favourable for his own suit, and at once presented a note, which had been given to him by his father, formally asking the hand of the young heiress of Artonne for the heir of the house of Langy. The count read it with a grave air, and then merely replied, "If you will go into the saloon, I will join you in a minute."

A momentary shade of apprehension came over the heart of Francis de Langy. It was in vain that he recalled the words of Monsieur de St. Medard, and the assurances which those words implied; he loved too much to be confident, and remained in doubt and fear till there were steps without, and the count himself came in leading Julie by the hand. Her face was like a rose in the morning, all blushes and tears; but the tears were happy ones, like the dew of the summer dawn; and when Francis sprang forward to meet her, she gave him both her hands, and he held her to his bosom as a bride.

They were joined, the moment after, by Madame d'Artonne, who, with a warmth and eagerness very different from the cold and formal manners of the day, expressed the delight she felt at the idea of her daughter being united to the adopted child of one who had been the earliest and dearest friend of her husband and herself. A few minutes of confused joy succeeded, during which neither Francis nor Julie well knew what they themselves or any other person said; and then came calmer considerations, as to when this union was to take place. A smile, thoughtful and grave, but yet full of calm and happy expectation, came upon the counte-

nances of Monsieur and Madame d'Artonne when they called to mind how young, how very young, were those two lovers. The only difficulty, indeed, that either of them felt was to make Francis de Langy understand that a considerable lapse of time must pass ere he could receive Julie's hand. That matter, however, was more easily settled than Monsieur d'Artonne expected, for Francis already had come to the same conclusion, so that he offered not a word of opposition, and the matter was left vague and uncertain.

"I must go to Riom immediately after breakfast," said Monsieur d'Artonne, as they were sitting down to the morning meal; "but I will not take you with me, Francis, upon a dull and somewhat sad errand. I have another affair for Julie and you to transact, better suited to your time of life and to your feelings. Do you remember the man who was in prison for poaching—Antoine Bure? He was set at liberty; but it appears that there were other charges of the same kind against him, which have kept him from his home, wandering amongst the mountains for the last fortnight. Now with some difficulty I have obtained an order to *surscoir*, which is tantamount, you know, to pardon; and you two, if you like, may carry up the notice thereof to his father's house. Do you know where it is, Julie?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Julie, "I can find it: it is to the left, above Bourasole, amongst the hills. I never was there; but I heard something about the Huguenots, and that you were angry with the people because they were unkind to them."

The matter was soon and easily settled. Francis undertook that they would easily discover the house, for he would not have given up the promised expedition for a mine in Peru. To be with Julie alone—to talk of love with her who was the object of it—to borrow from the sky, the air, the clouds, the sunshine, and the mountains of laughing Limagne, figures to image forth all the sweet sensations of his heart—to breathe the expansive happiness of his bosom under the free canopy of heaven—was a joy such as man has power only to taste in those few early years of life, so sweet, so fugitive, when all the flowers of the heart are in blossom, before they have been trampled down, or plucked, or have cast their leaves in the summer. Oh, how they pass away, those early years! and if joy itself be but a point in the vast space of time, how small is the point when joy is pure and unsullied, without the alloy of one regret!

Monsieur d'Artonne set off soon after for Riom, and Francis de Langy and his sweet companion were not long in taking their way up into the hills. There was a little abatement, indeed, of their anticipated pleasure from Madame d'Artonne insisting upon sending horses to meet them as they returned.

lest Julie should be tired. Julie felt that under such circumstances she could have walked untired double the distance, but something prevented her from saying so; and Francis de Langy would not oppose anything which was supposed to be for her comfort.

They took their way forth then alone, about ten o'clock in the morning; and, passing through the park that surrounded the chateau, they issued out on the other side into a small bridle-road shaded by walnut-trees, which led in those days from Riom to Portefaix. Here they met a number of country-women going on to buy or sell in Riom; and, as they wanted no society but their own, they struck off into a footpath which led round the base of one of the mountains between Riom and Clermont, called Chanturgue. They were now lonely enough: the vines were soon left behind them; some orchards full of rich fruit were likewise passed; and then came extensive meadows, stretching out from the mountain foot to the bank of a small rivulet, which wandered on and joined the Ambene above Riom. As they went on the scene grew wilder still: large masses of volcanic stone stood up out of the green turf; few houses were seen, and those far apart; villages and hamlets were at an end; the cottage of the shepherd, the solitary farm-house, were the only traces of man's habitation, except where a cross upon the summit of a crag, or upon the soft side of the mountain, either showed where some accident had happened, or called the wanderer passing that way to offer up his praises to the God of all, or spoke hope and comfort in the storm and tempest to those who perhaps were well-nigh abandoning themselves to despair.

Julie and Francis de Langy made no great haste along the road. One might almost have applied to them the lines of the poet—

Slow through the meadows roved they many a mile;
Toyed by each bank, and trifled at each stile.

It was not, indeed, exactly so; for of course refinement in education and in character produced a refinement in their affection which was not to be found in Phœbe Dawson and her lover. They were full of deep thoughts and strong attachment, but pure and high; and Love, too, was in his young timidity with both. Still they prolonged their walk as much as possible, paused and rested, and talked of future happiness, till the shadows, beginning to fall the other way, warned them how long they had lingered, and urged them more quickly on.

At length, amidst the wildest part of the scenery, appeared a few patches of corn nicely cultivated, a number of young trees planted in sheltered situations, and a low cottage with

some small out-buildings seated close upon the verge of a little lake, if it deserved that name, from which issued forth the rivulet that flowed through the valley they had followed. The expanse of water was probably not more than four or five acres at the most, but it was clear, bright, and perfectly calm, at the moment that Francis and Julie approached it, so that the hills around, the heavens and floating clouds above, and the little cottage by the side, were all reflected brightly from the surface. As they paused upon the edge to look down into the depth of the liquid mirror, in which the hills seemed to contemplate their own beauty and grandeur, they beheld the figure of a woman, apparently well advanced in life, come out of the cottage and gaze earnestly towards them.

Francis de Langy saw, but took no particular notice, and would fain have lingered there for a moment longer, dreaming fond dreams by Julie's side. Love is always more selfish in a man's bosom than in a woman's; and, though she was well pleased to stay there beside him, Julie, as soon as she remarked the old woman watching them, pressed Francis's arm gently with her hand, saying, "I am sure that is his mother, anxious about her son. Come, Francis; do not let us delay giving them any comfort that we can."

They went on immediately, and, following the little path round the tarn, soon reached the door of the cottage, where the old woman stood, clean and neat, with a withered but gentle countenance, which expressed some degree of wonder to see two young people, evidently of high rank, wandering up to the threshold of a remote and lowly habitation. She spoke first, addressing them in a courteous and quiet tone, without any of the *patois* of Auvergne, though with a touch of the Languedocian accent.

"Will you come in and rest, mademoiselle," she said, "and take a draught of milk?"

"We have come to see you, my good mother," answered Julie; "and so I will go in and sit down for a minute. Is your husband at home?"

"He is just at the back of the cottage, staking in a new cowshed," replied the old woman. "I will call him in a minute. Father! father! Antoine Bure!—here are a young lady and gentleman who want to see you!" and while Julie entered with Francis, and seated herself upon a low settle by the clean white table, an elderly man, the exact counterpart of the good dame herself, came in, putting on his rough short-tailed coat over a shirt as white as snow. His features were somewhat harsher, and the expression, upon the whole, more stern than that of his wife; but still it was a pleasant and benignant countenance, grave and firm, but kindly withal. In Julie's eyes from the first it was very prepossessing,

though she little knew the joy which the sight of that face was destined at one time to give her.

"I am the daughter of the Count d'Artonne," she said, as the old man bowed, and seemed to wait for her to speak; "I am the daughter of the Count d'Artonne, and have come to you by his desire."

"Oh! I know you very well, mademoiselle," replied the farmer; "and as for the good count, he has done as much for us as he can in withdrawing his own charge against our poor wild boy. He can't make the other people do the same, I know, though I think the other little lords, such as Monsieur d'Argental and Montvert, might do so too when a nobleman like him sets them the example."

"Oh, yes," replied Julie, "my father has done more for your son: he has got an order from Paris to *surséoir*, so that he is in no more danger, and can come back to you when he pleases. Here is the notice of it from the greffe."

The old man caught the young lady's hand with a sudden start of joy and satisfaction, and kissed it warmly. Then, taking the paper, he ran his eye over it and handed it to his wife, but she could scarcely read it for tears. It rarely occurs in England that a man of the lower, or even the middle classes can express easily any sudden emotion of pleasure or gratitude: it is seldom in France that he has not something well-turned and graceful to say upon the occasion.

"The count is very kind, mademoiselle," said the old man; "the count is very kind indeed in sending us this notice, and has doubled his kindness by the hand that brought it. I am very grateful, mademoiselle; and, though I am but a poor peasant, it is not impossible—nay, I think it very possible—that at some time I may have an opportunity of serving the count in return."

"Oh! he wants no return," replied Julie; "he is always glad to do any good that he can without wishing for recompense."

"Ah, mademoiselle!" answered the good farmer in a thoughtful tone, "when I was young, my mother used to tell me a story of a lion that got into a net, and a mouse that let him out. I dare say you know it, for most mothers tell it to their children ——"

Julie smiled, and nodded her fair head to indicate that she was aware of what he alluded to.

"Well," continued the Huguenot peasant, "I may be the mouse some day, mademoiselle. God knows, but I trust I may. And who is this young gentleman? The count has no son, I think."

"No," replied Francis de Langy; "I am but a friend, yet one who loves him nearly as well as if he were his son."

"Ah! and will be his son, too, some of these days," exclaimed the old woman, laughing; "I can see how it is very well. Nay, do not let me make you blush, mademoiselle. Happy are those who get the man they love. If it be a blessing in bright days, what is it not when the sky is cloudy or the storm comes down? But, God protect you both, I say!"

"Ay, God protect you both!" ejaculated the old man; "and he will protect you too, for I have always seen a blessing follow such things as you have done to-day."

Some further conversation of the same kind took place, and after remaining in the cottage about a quarter of an hour, Francis de Langy and his beautiful companion turned their steps homeward with an additional gleam of satisfaction on their way; for the heart of man, with all its corruption, does find delight in witnessing and promoting the happiness of others—at least, before all the efforts of the great tempter, who is constantly about our path in the world, have had their effect in changing to his evil purposes those sensations which God planted in our breast for our own good. They returned joyful, then; with peace in all their own feelings, and gladness, moreover, in that which they had communicated to others. The horses met them not far from the little lake, and entering the chateau, they found that the count had already come back from Riom. He was calm, and even cheerful. Madame d'Artonne seemed to enjoy the sight of their mutual love; and the day, which had risen in brightness, went down without a cloud.

CHAPTER XXIII.

As usual in the course of all true tales, from the time of Tom Jones down to the present day, the reader is obliged to go backwards and forwards in this book, from scene to scene and from place to place, in order that he may lose nothing of that which was taking place, and affecting the history of those in whom he feels an interest. The cause of it is, dear reader, that Fate is ubiquitous, and man the reverse—Fate operating everywhere; each individual is the centre of the circumstances which are attacking him on every side; so that, when we want to see the causes which affect any particular personage, we have to wander far and wide, and then do not discover even one-half.

About three o'clock of the very day on which Francis de Langy set out for Auvergne, the marquis, his father, was sitting in a small room fitted up with books and somewhat encumbered by papers. In this he usually transacted business with his intendant or steward, and that worthy func-

tionary had not long left him at the moment we speak of. The marquis, accustomed for many years to find in his son one great object of thought and emotion, now felt himself somewhat lonely in the absence of him who had supplied the place which the death of Victor de Langy had left vacant in his sensations; and, sending for the marchioness, he proposed to occupy the unfilled moments by conversing with her on the various arrangements which they had to make for the future.

She was followed into the room by a servant, who stood silent for a moment while the marchioness spoke to her husband; but her first words were an inquiry to which the man alone could give an answer.

"Who is that handsome, good-looking youth," she asked, "who seems waiting for you without?"

"It is a young gentleman, madam," said the laquay, "who has brought a letter for monsieur, which he will deliver to no one but himself; nor will he give his name, making a curious sort of answer when I asked it, and saying, 'You would know it well, and yet not know it at all.'"

"Let him come in," rejoined the marquis, with a smile; "he must explain his riddle himself."

The servant retired, and the next moment ushered in a very handsome and graceful youth, about the height of Francis de Langy, but not so powerful in frame. His complexion was considerably fairer, his eyes were closer together, and the expression of his countenance was intelligent and keen, but not very frank and open. He was dressed well, but not expensively; and his coat had somewhat the form used by the student of divinity who had not yet taken even the first step in his profession. He gazed for a moment in the countenance of the marquis with a strange and peculiar expression. It seemed that of wonder and affection, and then again he turned his eyes upon the marchioness with the same marked look.

"Well, sir," said Monsieur de Langy, somewhat surprised, "may I ask what is your business? Pray be seated."

But the young man did not take the chair which the servant had placed for him, advancing towards the marquis, and placing in his hand a letter folded and sealed.

Monsieur de Langy looked calmly at the address, then broke the seal, and proceeded to read the contents. In a moment, however, the look of quiet curiosity forsook his countenance. He turned pale; his eyes strained upon the paper; he cast a hurried glance at the youth before him, gazed at the letter again, and then anxiously looked at the marchioness. In the mean while the young man himself was manifestly agitated, the colour had fled from his face,

he trembled violently; and the marchioness, surprised at the emotion of her husband and his visiter, advanced to the former, exclaiming, "What is the matter, Victor? Do not conceal anything from me."

"Read, read!" cried the marquis, putting the letter into her hands; and Madame de Langy took the paper and read as follows:—

Ferme Godard, September, 17—.

SIR,—It is with shame and grief I address you, and only hope for pardon by making a full confession of the wrong in which I have taken part, though it was not originally designed or executed by myself. From the time that Madame la Marquise de Langy confided to the care of Marguerite Latouches her youngest son, my unhappy wife conceived the horrible and criminal design of placing her own child in his room, and obtaining for our boy the advantages of his rank and education. I acknowledge that I suffered myself to be persuaded to take part in this wicked act; but I have never ceased to regret it ever since, and have of late been every day more and more confirmed in my determination of restoring your son to his parents. With this view I have gone to the very extent of my means, and even beyond, in order to give him such an education as will not disgrace his family; and, although I admit that I deserve punishment, and submit myself totally to your will, yet I trust that this conduct may procure my pardon. As long as my wife lived, I was withheld, out of tenderness for her, from blighting the unjust prospects which she had obtained for our child; but her death this night sets me free from such considerations; and a conversation with my brother, your intendant, confirms me in my good resolutions. I send you, therefore, your son, who is the bearer of this letter, and only farther beseech you to grant me your forgiveness, and to afford some small means of subsistence to the unhappy youth who has so long occupied a place in your family. I have wrung from my wife, on her death-bed, an acknowledgment of her crime, which you will find written below. Your humble and repentant servant,

GERARD LATOUCHES.

I do confess and acknowledge that the child taken by me to Madame la Marquise de Langy was my child, and not hers; and that the one brought up by me as my own son is the child of the Marquis and Marquise de Langy.

MARGUERITE LATOUCHES.

As soon as the marchioness had read the paper, she let it drop from her hands, and gazed for a moment at the young man, who stood with his fine head bent, his hands clasped together, and a look of timid hope upon his countenance. With woman's unquestioning confidence she held out her arms towards him, exclaiming, "Oh, my poor boy! and have you been kept in poverty and misery all this time?"

The youth sprang forward and knelt at her feet; and, throwing her arms round him, she wept upon his neck with tenderness and joy.

The marquis, however, was not so fully satisfied, nor did he give way to such emotions. He remembered the noble bearing of him whom he had so long considered as his son, his high and generous spirit, his deep affection, his fine intellect; he compared his figure and face with those of the

youth before him; and, however prepossessing the latter might be, he felt that there was an inferiority, doubtless the result of education; and on questioning his own heart he could not but acknowledge that he would rather have had him whom he had so long called Francis de Langy for his son.

"Sit down," he said, giving the young man his hand; "sit down. Let me consider this matter. It takes me by surprise and overwhelms me;" and raising the paper from the ground, to which it had fallen, he read the contents over again.

As he did so, his countenance assumed a stern expression; and turning to the young man he asked with a frowning brow, "Who wrote this letter? This is not the style of Gerard Latouches, the farmer."

"It is not, sir," replied the young man promptly: "he wrote it, indeed, with his hand, but his relation, Martin Latouches, your intendant, dictated what he was to say. He is an excellent man, that Martin Latouches, and earnestly persuaded my foster-father to tell the truth."

"Where is Gerard Latouches now?" demanded the marquis; "is he without?"

"No, sir," answered the youth; "he feared to present himself before you, and remained at the house of your intendant at Langy."

"Well, well," said the marquis thoughtfully; "do not be alarmed, my poor boy. This shall all be inquired into accurately. At first sight it seems true; and if so, all that a father's tenderness can do shall be done to make up to you for what you have undergone. In the mean time——"

As he spoke, a servant entered to tell him that Monsieur de St. Medard was in the saloon; and the marquis, on the first impulse, ordered him to be shown in, saying, "This will affect him as much, perhaps, or more than ourselves." But the next instant he rose, adding, "No!—stay. I will speak with him without;" and, taking the letter in his hand, he quitted the room.

"Why, Victor, what is the matter?" exclaimed the viscount; "you look anxious and alarmed."

"And not without reason, my dear uncle," answered the marquis: "look at that paper, and say how I may best discover whether it be true or whether it be false. Remember, too," he added, "that extraordinary tale of the Bohemian, and what she said to our poor boy."

Monsieur de St. Medard took the paper without reply, read it from beginning to end in silence, returned it to the marquis, cast himself into a chair, and, covering his eyes with his hands, thought deeply for several minutes.

"I am afraid, Victor," he said at length, "that this is true. I recollect, when I returned from India, some fourteen or fifteen years ago, having ridden to the house of this woman to see your son. When I asked which of the two boys he was, there was a certain degree of hesitation and embarrassment about her which puzzled me—nay, excited some vague sort of suspicion which passed away after a time, but I remember it well now. This is a severe blow upon you, and a sad embarrassment to us all. Had it taken place but yesterday, much pain, disappointment, and anguish would have been spared; for I fear that the friends of Julie d'Artonne will never consent to her marriage with a *roturier*, and the poor boy will have been raised to the very height of happiness to be dashed down into the depths of misery. It is very unfortunate indeed; yet I fear that the tale may prove too true."

"Then nothing remains for me but to acknowledge the youth," said the marquis.

"Nay, nay, nay!" cried Monsieur de St. Medard; "there is a good deal more to be done than that. Our convictions in this matter are nothing in the eye of the law. This dear boy has been for fifteen years recognised as your son, and it will require very strong evidence to shake him out of his possession of that station. Worthy of it he is in every respect—high, noble, generous; and it is scarcely possible to suppose that the blood of a mean rascal, such as this Gerard Latouches always was, can flow in his veins. I always thought that education did a great deal: I shall now think that it does everything."

"But what do you intend to do?" demanded the marquis, "and what would you have me do? Give me your advice, I beseech you, my dear uncle, for I am bewildered and astounded."

"What I intend to do is very clear," replied Monsieur de St. Medard. "To me Francis is a son; he always has been such, and ever shall be. I may regret that he is not yours also, if it should prove so; but it is for his inherent good qualities that I love him now, whatever might be the motives on which I first adopted him. There is a weakness in one's nature, certainly, for one's own kindred blood; but that weakness shall never, with me, stand in the way of justice and right, of love and esteem, of honour and propriety. I made no condition with him, when I took him, that he should be of the house of Langy. I have promised him a thousand times to be a father to him, and so I would be if he were the son of my worst enemy. So much for my conduct, Victor: now for yours. Although you may believe, as I do, that this tale is true, and that the youth here spoken of is really your

son, still, before you disown the one and receive the other, let the judges of the land inquire and decide, and do nothing to bias their opinion either way. In the mean while do **not** send the youth back; let him be comfortably provided for, and proceed with his education. The man says he has had some instruction: to what point has it been carried? Have you seen him? What is he like?"

"All one could desire or wish, apparently," replied the marquis: "graceful in manners and in person; and, though placed in so strange and painful a situation, conducting himself with propriety and modesty."

"Poor Francis!" said the viscount, his mind reverting to him who had been so long the object of all his thoughts and affections; "his is a sad case indeed. I wish to heaven that I could go down to Auvergne myself to break this news to him, and to aid him with counsel and consolation; but I have promised the king to stay, and I must keep my word. However, my dear Victor, we must make no delay in recalling the poor boy, and in making the Count d'Artonne acquainted with the fact of a new claimant having appeared to the inheritance of De Langy. We must be as open as day, and not let it be said that in such delicate circumstances we kept the count in ignorance even for a day. I will write to Francis; you communicate with the count; and to-night we will send off a messenger to Riom."

Such was the course agreed upon; but, in the first instance, the viscount followed his nephew into the little room of business before mentioned, in order to be introduced to the youth whose arrival had caused so great a change in the arrangements of the Marquis de Langy. Monsieur de St. Medard entered the room with a grave and thoughtful air, and as he looked at the young man in silence from head to foot, his brow became contracted and his lips compressed.

There was something in the lad's appearance that did not satisfy him. It might be that he was unwilling to be pleased; that his love for another threw a mist before his eyes, which would not suffer him to perceive all those graces and high qualities which had struck the marquis and the marchioness; for, though of a strong and generally unprejudiced mind, Monsieur de St. Medard had his weaknesses like other men. But, notwithstanding that the youth's countenance was unpleasant to him, still memory recalled the scene in the Ferme Godard sufficiently to show him that the features and complexion, though somewhat altered by time, were those of the boy whom he had seen with Marguerite Latouches, and whom he had first fixed upon as his nephew's son. He put a few questions to him, and received answers distinct and clear. There was nothing that he could find fault with, there was

nothing to create a doubt; and as he left the room to write to Francis de Langy, he murmured to himself, "It is a great pity, a very great pity, that he has been brought up by this pitiful pair. We shall find his mind full of meannesses, and perhaps of small vices. One can see it in his graceful bends and inclinations, pretty though they be; there is a want of moral dignity in his aspect which will be hard to get over."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRANCIS DE LANGY had not risen so early as usual, for he had remained during the greater part of the night keeping watch with Love. He found it impossible to sleep during many hours after he had retired, for every feeling was wide awake within, as on some joyous festival, when the whole night passes in revel, dance, and merriment, and no eyelid feels the heavy weight of slumber, though half the space of watching would at any other time have weighed them down. But early youth is fond of such sweet wakefulness; and, far from striving to sleep, he rose again from his bed towards two in the morning, and, opening his window, looked out upon the starlit skies, while between him and them floated by the pageant-like figures of imagination, grand, bright, and beautiful, at the command of the enchanter Hope. At length, almost when daylight was about to appear, his eyes felt somewhat heavy, and he cast himself down again, thinking to sleep for a few short hours, and then

Wake for joy, like nightingales in May.

He was just dressed, and Jean Marais was adding the last touch to what he conceived his master's perfect toilet, when one of the servants of the Count d'Artonne brought up a letter, saying that it had just arrived by an express courier from Paris. The fact of having been followed so soon by a messenger gave Francis de Langy some alarm, but his fears pointed in a very different direction from the just one. He thought that his father or his mother must be ill; and, taking the letter from the man's hand, he looked first at the address to see by whom it was written. He instantly recognised the hand of the viscount, and saw written in the corner the words, "To be read alone."

"Leave me, Jean," he said, "leave me;" and sitting down he opened the packet.

His eye ran hastily over the contents; his cheek became pale; his lips quivered; he shook violently. It was in vain that Monsieur de St. Medard had striven to tell the truth in language as gentle and as kind as possible. "It was in vain that he assured his adopted child that he should ever be to

him a son, let the result of the pending inquiry be what it might; that his fortune, his name, his rank, were all secured to him in so formal and legal a manner that he could never be deprived of them. It was in vain that he tried to cheer and console him with hope upon the very subject of all others which affected him the most. Still it was a severe and a terrible blow—crushing, overwhelming, confounding him altogether. It seemed impossible for him to collect his thoughts, so great, so sudden, so bewildering was the effect of the intelligence he had received; but when at length a full perception of his situation broke through the mist, and showed him the real state of his prospects and his probable fate, how dreadful was the sensation with which the mind's eye rested on the hopeless blank before him!

There is a story of a traveller proceeding to the city of Augusta at the time of an earthquake, and arriving towards evening upon the summit of the hills from which the towers and spires of the town used to be visible. A light mist hung over the plain, but he rode on joyfully towards the place of repose, till suddenly the mist cleared away, and he found himself standing on the edge of a wide lake, with nothing but an idiot boy beside him, who could give no account of how or when the city had disappeared.

Something like the feelings of that traveller were those of Francis de Langy. At the very moment when his heart was approaching to its place of rest—when, full of joy, and hope, and satisfaction, it seemed as if every wish of his heart were on the eve of being accomplished—in an instant the mist which hid the future from his sight was dissipated, and nothing was before him but a yawning gulf, in which all his brightest expectations had disappeared. Alas, alas for the hopes of man! He builds up, and cities arise and crumble away; he plants the seed; the tree rises, flourishes, withers, descends into the dust. He forms, he shapes with the chisel, he pours with the brush, and Time comes with his heavy foot and crushes it all to ashes. He breathes forth his mind; he writes his ideas and his fancies on the paper, the parchment, or the stone; “he returns into the dust, and all his thoughts perish.” But of all the weak and fragile things that he produces or possesses, the most frail and evanescent are his hopes. Alas for the hopes of man! they are very vain indeed. That which is most cherished, that which is most fondly loved, that which is pre-eminently dear, is ever the thing the soonest taken from us. A voice, the solemn and awful voice of Fate, is still crying out to us, “Set not your heart on earth or on any of earth's things; for, lo! they are passing away, even while you look upon them.”

So it was with him: his rank, station, and noble blood

were but as gaudy ornaments, of which he could have stripped himself without much regret. Wealth, too!—what cared he for wealth in those early years when the heart is free and all the energies are strong? when comforts and luxuries, the sweetmeats of second childhood, are little valued by hardy manhood? Competence was all he cared for, and that he thought he could always win with his own right hand. But Julie d'Artonne!—could he lose her he loved? Could he see her snatched from him, without learning the terrible lesson of what it is to despair? There all the bright hopes and wishes of his young, ardent spirit had centred; there all the fond, eager, strong affections of a heart unsullied and unworn; and could he see her taken from him at the very moment that she was promised? Could he see a bar, irrevocable as it appeared to him, placed between them for ever, without feeling that life had nothing left to strive for, that hope itself was dead, that the world was all one vacant blank? Oh! bitterly, most bitterly did he feel it, and for nearly an hour he gave way to sensations too painful to describe. At the end of that time, however, the firm principles and steadfast notions of right and wrong in which he had been educated began to assert their sway over him; and he asked himself how he was to act under the circumstances in which he was placed.

“I must communicate this immediately,” he said, “to Monsieur d'Artonne. He must judge and act. Oh! how will he act? how will he judge? Alas, alas! it is but too clear!” and Francis de Langy hid his eyes, as if to shut out the future from his sight. A moment after, however, he rose suddenly, and, quitting his room, proceeded to that of the Abbé Arnoux, where he remained in conversation with his kind and good preceptor for some time.

In the mean while, events scarcely less painful had taken place in another part of the Chateau d'Artonne. The count had risen some hours before the courier from Paris reached the place, and he too experienced some surprise on receiving a second letter in the hand of the Marquis de Langy, so soon after the arrival of Francis.

“Some accident has happened,” he thought; “some new loss in the family. Poor Francis! I am sorry for him. I wonder whether this curious invention of letters has given more pleasure or pain, more consolation or anguish, in this world? The latter, I fear.”

As these ideas passed through his mind, he broke the seal; and then, turning to the contents, read the intelligence with which the reader is already acquainted. Monsieur d'Artonne was really distressed: kindness, good feeling, affection for his daughter, high esteem for Francis de Langy, made a

strong effort in his bosom to overcome the prejudices of education and the common habits of feeling in his class and country, but it was in vain. That men should say he, the Count d'Artonne, whose blood had come down pure since the foundation of the monarchy, whose family was allied to some of the first in the land, who had always stood amongst the high nobility of France—that he had given his daughter to a *roturier*, to the son of a peasant! It was quite impossible; it could not be done. He might deeply regret it; he might feel for the young man most sincerely; he might do anything he could to serve him: but still he could not enter into an alliance such as that; still he could not look upon himself as bound by a promise made under such a mistake. Francis could not expect it himself, he thought; Julie, too, would surely shrink from such a union. The Count d'Artonne had either forgotten the feelings of his youth, or knew not how firmly the first affection of her heart had taken possession of Julie d'Artonne.

Hastening to the chamber of his wife, the count communicated to her the news he had received. Madame d'Artonne was more moved than he had been: she acknowledged that it was impossible, that it could not be thought of, to unite their daughter to the son of a peasant of Picardy; but yet she wept at the thought of the anguish it would occasion to all, and judged better than her husband of what would be the feelings of her child. After a brief conversation with the countess, Monsieur d'Artonne proceeded to his daughter's chamber. She was not there, and going down to the saloon he entered somewhat suddenly. Julie was standing alone near the window; and the moment she heard the door open she started and looked round, while the warm blood of happy expectation rose up and coloured her fair cheek. Whom was it that she expected to see? Certainly not her father, or her heart would have beat more quietly. Advancing towards him, however, she gave him the morning salutation, her whole face beaming from the sunshine in her heart. Oh! how soon that sunshine was clouded when she heard the tidings of the change in her lover's fortunes! The bright tears rose in her beautiful eyes; but she instantly dashed them away, exclaiming with a faint smile, "Poor Francis! how sorry I am for him! but we must do all we can to comfort and console him." Oh! what a pleasure it will be to try to make up to him for all that he has lost!"

Monsieur d'Artonne stood reproved before his child: he could not but own that hers were the high and noble thoughts, his the low and worldly ones; and yet he could not vanquish the habitual feelings in which they were founded. During a moment or two he was silent, for he knew not well what

to reply. There is many a weak and wicked parent who under such circumstances would have had recourse to anger and to harshness, the ordinary resource of feeble minds when embarrassed by their own follies or prejudices; but Monsieur d'Artonne, notwithstanding some points of weakness, was too wise and too good a man so to shelter himself at the expense of his child. He wrongly believed that, in giving way to the customs of his class and his country, he was consulting her interests, when in fact he was consulting his own pride; and, as his wish was to make her happy, he would not on any account have added, even by a stern word, to the temporary sorrow which he considered it necessary to inflict upon her for her future benefit.

After pausing then for a time, he took her hand and led her to a seat, saying, "You must listen to me, my dear Julie, for I am afraid this matter is even more painful than you imagine; and do not think your father harsh or unkind in placing the facts of the case plainly and at once before you. Our young friend, whom I shall ever consider with the highest regard, whatever the result may be, seems likely to be deprived not only of the whole inheritance, which since the death of Victor de Langy he had every reason to expect—not only of the future rank and station of Marquis de Langy—but of all claim to noble blood."

"Ah! it is very terrible indeed!" exclaimed Julie. "Do let me go and try to soothe him, my dear father."

"Nay, nay, Julie," said the count, more embarrassed by her utter unconsciousness of any obstacle being interposed by the existing circumstances to her marriage with Francis de Langy than if she had foreseen them all, and expressed a determination to disregard them: "nay, nay; you must hear me out," he said. "You do not seem to comprehend"—and he lowered his voice as he spoke—"that the rank and station of your family and the customs of the country will prevent me from giving my daughter to any other than a man of noble blood."

Julie started back and gazed in the count's face, her bright eyes full of terror and surprise.

"Oh, my father!" she exclaimed—"oh, my father! is that the law?"

"Not exactly the law, Julie," replied her father; "but custom, which is nearly as strong as law, renders it quite out of the question that I should ever bestow the hand of my child on the son of a peasant."

"And will you, my father," asked Julie, her look of astonishment and consternation increased rather than diminished—"will you take from him the only consolation he has left, when you tell me that accident, and not his own fault,

has stripped him already of everything else that he had a right to expect? Oh, my dear father! you will not, you surely will not be so cruel—you, who have always taught me that honour is the highest nobility, that virtue and good conduct are the richest of all treasures. Oh, no, no! I cannot believe it!" and poor Julie burst into a bitter flood of tears.

The count was moved, and rising in silence he walked musing to the window. His heart yearned to yield, but he thought of the peasant relations and friends of his future son-in-law; he fancied he heard the low-born farmer calling Julie his daughter; and, hardening himself in his resolution, he returned to her side, saying, "Julie, this is a matter which will not admit of argument: the time will come when you will see that I am right."

Julie made no answer, but kept her overflowing eyes bent upon the ground.

"I am deeply pained to grieve you," he continued; "but it is absolutely necessary you should understand that, if the claims of this young man who has started up be just, I can never bestow your hand upon him to whom it was promised under a mistake. You must not think of it."

Julie raised her head and wiped away the tears from her eyes. "I have always obeyed you, my dear father," she replied; "I have always tried to think you right in all you did. You forbid me to marry him; and even if the law allowed me, which I suppose it does not, your command would be my law; but in return I have one request to make of you. As soon as this question is decided, and it is determined that he loses his rank and inheritance, and also by your command his promised bride—whenever hope is over for us both, in short—you must let me go into a convent, for I have nothing more to do with the world."

"Nay, nay, my dear Julie," answered her father tenderly. "You will think better upon that subject: you are too young to have felt such deep emotions as to render that step even reasonable. You may be grieved at present, Julie; but such feelings will pass away with time, and I may yet see you the happy wife of some man of your own rank."

"Never!" said Julie, in a firm but calm tone; "never, my dear father! Yesterday, with your permission and consent, I plighted myself to him whom I shall always love, by every vow that he could ask me to take. I know that you will say we were all under an error: it is very true; and therefore I am sure Francis himself would free me from such vows, and will consent to my obeying you so far as never to think of a union that you disapprove of. But my own conscience will never set me free to wed another, and I call God

to witness that I will never do it. If I do, may I never know a moment's peace here or hereafter!"

"Julie! Julie!" exclaimed the count, trying to stop her; but the words were pronounced, and there was something, both in the manner with which she uttered them and in his previous knowledge of his daughter's character from her childhood upwards, which taught the Count d'Artonne that those words were irrevocable.

"What have you said?" he exclaimed; but before she could answer the door of the saloon opened, and a lieutenant of the *maréchaussée* entered, and advanced with his hat in his hand.

"Monsieur le Comte d'Artonne," he said, "I am grieved at the task I have to perform; but by order of the intendant of police I arrest you on the charge of murdering the late Marquis de Bausse."

The count turned deadly pale, and Julie, whose cup of anguish wanted but one drop more to make it overflow, sank fainting at his feet.

CHAPTER XXV.

It may seem strange that such an event as we have related in the end of the last chapter should have occurred at this early hour in the morning, when it is known that the Count d'Artonne had on the preceding day parted from the intendant with the greatest kindness and apparent confidence existing between them. The intendant had accompanied him, when he took leave, to the very bottom of the steps, pressed his hand, and bade him adieu with every token of regard and respect. It may be asked if, between that afternoon and the following day, that powerful officer had not received some intelligence which had induced him to suspect the count of the crime for which he was now arrested. But nothing of the kind had taken place. He had, indeed, been visited very early on the preceding morning, and several hours before he saw the count, by Peter Neri, the valet of Monsieur d'Artonne, who had taken the first opportunity of quarrelling again with Jean Marais on the very night of his arrival, and who had been heard to swear that he would have revenge. But, as we have said, whatever was the character of the communication made by the valet to the intendant, it occurred long before the interview between the latter and the count; and, to say the truth, Peter Neri had returned not very well satisfied with his reception, having been treated with some contempt, and given to understand that he was looked upon in the light of a rogue.

All the great machines of the world, however, roll upon

small wheels. In the evening of the day during which Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne had taken the long and happy walk we described some pages back, no less a personage than Jean Marais, having strolled forth to the good town of Riom, was wandering along through some of the old and not very much frequented streets, when he suddenly encountered the intendant of justice, police, and finance, walking along, a servant following him, carrying a cloak and sword. Jean at once recollected the great functionary, and, remembering that it was by his order he had been released from prison, very reverently took off his hat and made him a low bow. The intendant noticed him with a slight inclination, and was passing on; but suddenly he seemed to recollect him, paused, and beckoned him to come near.

"Ah!" he said, "are not you the man who was first accused by the Marchioness de Bausse of the murder of her son?"

"Yes, monseigneur," replied Jean Marais with a low inclination; "I had that misfortune."

"Has she taken you into her family again?" demanded the intendant.

"Oh, dear, no," answered Jean Marais: "I believe, monseigneur, that she accuses me of the murder to this day, and says that you were very wrong to let me out of prison, for which I owe you my most humble thanks."

"She may find that I was right, not wrong," replied the intendant. "Have you yourself any cause to suspect any one of committing the murder?" demanded the intendant: "you may speak to me in confidence."

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed Jean Marais, whose opinion or informers in general was not very favourable; "I never suspect any one."

"Indeed!" said the intendant; "you are very innocent."

This was intended as a sneer, but Jean Marais felt it to be an insult, for he did not like the reputation of innocence at all. He only bowed his head, however, for the intendant was not a man to bandy words with; and the other proceeded to inquire whether, to his knowledge, the late marquis had incurred the hatred or enmity of any one.

"Why, sir, he was pretty fortunate in that respect," replied Jean Marais with a peculiar smile.

"How do you mean?" said the intendant. "I had heard that he did not live upon very good terms with many people in the neighbourhood."

"That is just what I intended to imply," answered the valet of Francis de Langy.

"Then why did you say he was fortunate in that respect?" inquired the great officer.

"Because he tried hard to make everybody hate him," replied Jean Marais, "and he succeeded to a miracle."

"Let me have no riddles, sir," said the intendant drily, "for I am accustomed to trust the town jailer with a solution thereof. Did you ever hear of any quarrel or disagreement between the marquis and the Count d'Artonne?"

"Never," answered Jean Marais, "but about Mademoiselle Julie, and that was but a few words."

"Indeed!" rejoined the intendant with an indifferent air; "and pray what was that about?"

"Why, Monsieur de Bausse, with his usual modesty," replied Jean Marais, "wished the count to promise him the hand of Mademoiselle d'Artonne, and when the count refused he was very angry; upon which Monsieur d'Artonne remarked, that the hand of his daughter should never be given to any licentious debauchee in the land; that he would not refuse her, if her own inclination led her that way, to any honourable and respectable gentleman; but that the man who sought her must show that he was fitted to make a reasonable woman happy, before he should have his consent."

As far as it was possible for him to smile, the intendant did so on the present occasion (not unmarked by Jean Marais), and replied, "A very wise and sensible answer of the count. Pray, in whose service are you now, my good friend?"

"In that of the young Count de Langy," said Jean Marais.

"And is he down here now?" asked the intendant, with a look which did not express the greatest satisfaction.

Now, Jean Marais was one of those men (there are not a few of them in the world) who, by the help of very slight indications—a word, a tone, a look—read with tolerable accuracy what is passing in the hearts even of the cold and cautious; and he had not failed on the present occasion to discover a certain portion of the secret thoughts and purposes of the intendant. It must be remarked, too, that the dry and austere tone of that personage, and the rebuke he had given him for his quaint method of expressing himself, had not particularly conciliated the valet's regard; so that he was very well inclined to say or do anything that might give the royal officer a certain degree of pain or annoyance, when it could be effected without the slightest possibility of offence. As soon then as he discovered, first, that the intendant had some views upon the hand of Julie d'Artonne, and next, that he was a little jealous of Francis de Langy, he determined to have the satisfaction of communicating to him the news, which had speedily become current in the Château d'Artonne, that the young lady was engaged to his master; and he replied accordingly to the intendant's question, "Oh, dear, yes,

sir; he came down yesterday. He is to marry Mademoiselle d'Artonne, you know."

So far the news was true, and as no one had ever told him to keep it a secret, our friend Jean was very well justified in retailing it; but, not contented with the simple truth, Jean Marais resolved to have a lash at the wound he had made, and he added, "They are to be married immediately, I believe."

Alas! Jean Marais knew not the full extent of the mischief that he did, as indeed is very generally the case with those who inflict pain upon others. The few words which he then uttered caused the arrest of the Count d'Artonne, and, as a consequence, all that long train of sorrows and misfortunes which the rest of this book is destined to record. He had not even the satisfaction himself of seeing how far he had mortified and pained the intendant, for that officer was always upon his guard against great emotions; so that the words of Jean Marais produced not the slightest change upon his countenance, though for the last three weeks he had been nourishing in his heart the scheme of uniting himself to Mademoiselle d'Artonne, and had buoyed himself up with very confident hopes. He was silent, indeed, for the space of half-a-minute; but he then replied quite calmly, as if the matter had been one of the most perfect indifference, "Indeed! Are they not very young?"

"Oh, yes, monseigneur," replied Jean Marais; "but the count and countess approve of early marriages, I believe."

"They are quite right," replied the intendant. "I shall go over and offer my congratulations to-morrow."

He meant more than he said; and, dismissing Jean Marais with an inclination of the head, he returned to the house which he occupied for the time, and gave orders that the Count d'Artonne should be arrested early on the ensuing morning, preparing to follow the officer to whom he entrusted this unpleasant commission, for the purpose of taking advantage of anything that might occur in favour of his own views.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE Count d'Artonne folded his arms upon his chest and gazed for several moments upon the ground. He took no notice of his daughter, thinking perhaps that it was as well she should be unconscious of all the painful things that must take place around her; or it might be that his mind was so overwhelmed in the depth of his own anguish that he regarded not for the time the grief of others.

"Good heaven! what is the matter?" exclaimed Madame

d'Artonne, entering the saloon; "the chateau is full of soldiers and archers!" But, even as she spoke, her eye fell upon the officer of the *maréchaussée*, and then turned to her husband and her child: the first still standing, gazing on the ground, as if he did not mark her entrance; the latter lying senseless on the floor where she had fallen. Madame d'Artonne paused in terror and surprise. "What is the matter?" she cried; "gracious heaven! what is the matter?"

"It is my painful duty, madam," replied the officer, "to arrest the Count d'Artonne on the charge of having murdered the Marquis de Bausse."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the countess, the warm blood rising angrily into her still beautiful cheek. What! the Count d'Artonne commit a murder?—a man looked up to through the whole country, not only for his virtues, but for his benevolence! Nonsense! I say—or rather calumny. This is the work of some enemy. Can Henriette de Bausse have done this?"

"I really know nothing upon the subject, madam," replied the officer: "I only know the orders I have received, but not the motives of them."

"Speak! speak, D'Artonne!" cried the countess, "and tell them how false this is."

The count waved his hand sadly, but made no reply; and the officer added in a firm though respectful tone, "I cannot suffer the count, madam, to converse with you further. My orders are to confine him to one chamber till the intendant can arrive, and to allow him to hold no communication with any one whatsoever."

The Countess d'Artonne cast herself into her husband's arms, exclaiming, "They cannot, they will not be so cruel!"

"Hush, my love! hush!" replied the count; "we must obey the law, though not unfrequently it may be unjust. Look to poor Julie; she will need consolation in all ways. Be content. To whose malice I owe this charge, of course I cannot tell; but they cannot keep me separate long from you, my beloved wife. Nay, I must do as I am commanded. If I am permitted, sir, to choose the room where I am to be confined, it will be my own dressing-room: I have books there, which may amuse my mind."

"Assuredly, sir," answered the officer of the *maréchaussée*; "I do not wish to be in the least harsh, and doubt not you will soon prove your innocence."

These were words of course, which had been spoken a thousand times before, to every gentleman of a certain degree of wealth or station who had fallen into the hands of the honourable thief-taker; but nevertheless they were comfortable to the ears of the Count d'Artonne; and, gently with-

drawing himself from his wife's arms, he proceeded to the chamber where he was to remain a close prisoner till the arrival of the intendant.

The personage who had arrested him took especial care to examine the height of the window from the ground, and to see that a second door, which conducted into another room, was locked; a third also caught his attention, but it opened merely into a closet from which there was no exit; and, having satisfied himself on all these points, the officer retired, placing two of his men in the corridor to keep guard.

Some four hours elapsed before the intendant made his appearance; but when he did so he found Madame d'Artonne at the door, called forth by the sound of his carriage-wheels, and eager to learn something more of the charge against her husband. She had now recovered her composure in a degree; but still the tears rose in her eyes, as, after the first ceremonious greeting, she eagerly inquired who had accused Monsieur d'Artonne of such a crime, and what were the circumstances which could afford even a pretence for his arrest. "You know, Monsieur l'Intendant," she said, "that it must be false. You, a friend of the family, are well acquainted with my husband's character, disposition, virtues, and high principles. You cannot yourself suspect him for a moment."

The intendant listened to her with his usual imperturbable air, calm, cold, but attentive, without the slightest appearance of sympathy, but yet also without the slightest appearance of sternness. "My dear madam," he said, "I am bound in this instance to act as if I knew nothing of Monsieur d'Artonne. I have only to look upon him as an individual against whom a serious charge is brought, and to take the best means in my power of ascertaining whether that charge be true or false. You must excuse me for not entering upon any of the questions connected with this case until such time as all the preliminary evidence is collected. Thus much I must say as a magistrate; but as a friend of your family, allow me to assure you that I am most deeply grieved to have caused to persons I love and esteem so much pain and anxiety as the arrest of Monsieur d'Artonne must have produced; more especially," he added, "to have been obliged to do so at a time when you were all probably in the midst of rejoicing over the approaching union of your daughter to young Monsieur de Langy."

There was the slightest possible touch of sarcastic bitterness in his tone; but Madame d'Artonne did not remark it, and replied, with a sad shake of the head, "You are mistaken, sir; you are mistaken altogether. Instead of coming to disturb joy and satisfaction, this event was destined to add sorrow to sorrow. Not an hour before, we had received the sad intel-

ligence that the poor youth, for whom we all entertain so deep a regard, was likely to lose his rank and station altogether."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the intendant, hurried into a stronger expression of surprise than he usually permitted to visit his countenance; "how is that possible, madam? Is he an impostor?"

"No! oh, no!" replied the countess. "It is a long story, which I cannot tell now, Monsieur l'Intendant. He is the son of the nurse, it seems, substituted for the real child during their infancy. But tell me, sir—what do you propose to do? Surely, surely you will not commit the Count d'Artonne to a prison?"

The intendant paused for a moment ere he replied. "That, madam," he answered at length, "must depend upon circumstances. It would be with the greatest regret that I did so, and you may be sure that I will take the most favourable view of the case that it is possible to receive. My deep regard for the Count d'Artonne would make any step against him as painful to myself as to any of his own family, so you have the greatest assurance of no unnecessary severity occurring; but I must do the duties of my office, though with mildness; and in the first place I shall have to examine accurately every fact connected with this business."

"Surely, Monsieur l'Intendant," pursued the countess, thinking she perceived a softening of his tone—"surely, Monsieur l'Intendant, the count's general reputation and high character must go for something in his favour."

"Undoubtedly, madam; undoubtedly," replied the intendant, somewhat in contradiction to his former assertion: "*primâ facie*, it is evident that he could not commit such a crime. But I beg that you will retire for a little, leaving me to pursue the necessary course of proceeding, and making your mind as easy as possible, knowing that the person who conducts the inquiry is as well disposed to yourself and family as any man in all France. I will, in the first place, hold some conversation with the count himself.—Monsieur Aubry, where is the Count d'Artonne?"

"This way, sir," said the officer of *maréchaussée*, who had come out with the countess; and while the countess retired to wait with fear and apprehension for the result of the pending investigation, the intendant mounted the stairs and entered the dressing-room of the count. He remained alone with him for more than an hour and a half, and at the end of that time he called in the officer of *maréchaussée*, and gave into his possession a number of letters and memoranda which he had found in the count's dressing-room, bidding him take an exact list of them, and bring them to Riom that night.

He then spoke with Madame d'Artonne for a moment, and afterwards made a general visit to every room in the house, opening the drawers and instituting a cursory examination of any papers that he found. The chamber of the Abbé Arnoux was not exempt, but there he discovered nothing. The good old man himself was seated in a large arm-chair, having one hand supported by a sling, his head covered with bandages, and his brow somewhat disfigured by wounds not yet entirely healed. He was conversing with Francis de Langy, and some writing materials lay before them, but nothing was written on the paper. The intendant bowed ceremoniously, and the abbé tried to rise from his chair to acknowledge the salutation, which Francis only returned by a very slight inclination of the head, and a look as stern and grave as that of the functionary himself.

"I am under the necessity of searching for papers, sir," said the intendant. "Perhaps you will allow this gentleman," pointing to a man in a robe who followed him, "to examine any drawers or bureaux belonging to the Count d'Artonne."

"They all belong to the count, sir," replied the abbé; "but they contain nothing but my property, which is so little in volume that the gentleman will not have much trouble in his perquisitions. Pray let him proceed."

"May I inquire, sir," said Francis de Langy, "if I can be permitted to see Monsieur d'Artonne?—It will be a great satisfaction to me," he continued, judging from the cold and unmoved countenance of the intendant that his request was about to be refused. "I am about to return to Paris under very peculiar circumstances, and may probably never have an opportunity of seeing the count again. I wish, therefore, to bid him adieu, and to thank him for much kindness, as well as for intentions he once entertained towards me which other events have frustrated."

The shadow of a smile came over the intendant's countenance, and he answered at once, "From the want of confirmatory proofs against the count, sir, I have determined to leave him in his own house, under *surveillance*, until I have examined farther. He will remain confined to his own room, properly guarded; but I have already informed the Countess d'Artonne that his valet and the members of his family will be permitted to visit him separately for half-an-hour at a time. I will give orders that you shall be treated as one of the family in this respect till your departure. Good morning, sir. Good morning, Monsieur l'Abbé."

Francis de Langy bowed his head, and the intendant retired, leaving the greffier who had accompanied him to conclude his examination of the Abbé Arnoux's room, which was

soon accomplished. The young gentleman then betook himself to the window, and looked out with a haggard eye and teeth set fast, in the effort to keep down emotions which were struggling for some vent. The abbé gazed at him from time to time, but said nothing; and then, drawing the paper towards him, began to write with a feeble hand. In about ten minutes the intendant's carriage rolled away from the terrace before the chateau. The lieutenant of the *maréchaussée*, with a number of his troopers, followed shortly after; and Francis de Langy then turned suddenly from the window, saying to the abbé, "I must go and speak once more with the Countess d'Artonne. I will be back again, my dear friend, very shortly. Do not fear for me; I will not give way. Now that I know my fate, I am prepared to meet it;" and he left the room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

At the bottom of the stairs Francis de Langy met the countess's pretty maid, apparently coming from the saloon. The girl's eyes were red, as if she had been weeping; but the moment she saw the young gentleman she stopped, saying, "Oh, sir, I was coming to seek you."

"Where is Madame d'Artonne?" demanded Francis eagerly.

"She is with the count, sir," answered the girl; "but Mademoiselle Julie is in the saloon, and sent me to ask you to come to her. She wishes to see you directly."

The young gentleman passed on without reply, turned up the narrow passage to the left, and opened the door of the room in which he had been told he would find Julie. She was seated at a table, her head leaning on her hand, her face very pale, and her eyes anxious, but no trace of recent tears upon her countenance. The moment she beheld Francis de Langy, she started up, ~~ran~~ to meet him, and cast herself into his arms.

"Oh, Francis!" she exclaimed, while he held her tenderly to his heart and kissed her cheek, "you must go to my poor father, hear what he has to say, and try to save him. I know you will forgive his unkindness of this morning, even if he did speak harshly, now that he is in anguish and distress."

"He did not speak harshly, dear Julie, for I did not see him," replied Francis; "it was your mother who informed me that he had come to the decision I expected, and she was telling me as gently as such painful intelligence could be communicated, when the sight of the archers and their

prévôt alarmed her. But, dear Julie, there can be surely no real cause for fear in your father's case. You frighten yourself needlessly, I am sure."

Julie hid her eyes upon his shoulder, and he could feel that she trembled violently.

"Alas!" she said, "alas! there is always cause for fear, even with the innocent, where there are enemies. But, Francis," she continued, looking in his face, "I must not, I cannot talk to you upon this subject: you must see my father, you must speak to him. Oh! I hope he will confide in you. Go to him as soon as my mother leaves him, but stay with me till then. Do not leave me by myself, Francis. I never was afraid of being alone before; but now I feel as if my heart would break, when I am left in solitude to think over all the sorrow that has fallen upon us this day."

"Leave you, dearest Julie!" cried Francis de Langy: "I will stay with you for ever if I may. But, alas! that cannot be; I must soon quit you, never to see you again, and only to hear of you, perhaps, as the bride of another."

"No!" replied Julie, looking him firmly in the face: "no, Francis; that will never be!"

"You cannot tell, Julie; you cannot tell," replied Francis de Langy: "your father's commands, your mother's wishes, will have weight with you; and think not that I will blame you, Julie. You have duties to perform to them, which must supersede all thoughts of me."

"No, Francis; no!" replied Julie again. "I have duties certainly, but none that will make me give my hand to another. That is out of the question. I have told my father that it cannot be. I have sworn it in a way that can never be broken; I have called down the wrath of God upon my head if I do. But let us talk of him, Francis. I can but think of him now, of the danger that he is in, of the grief that he must be suffering.—Is there no possibility, Francis," she added in a low voice, "of effecting his escape?"

"Good heaven, Julie!" cried Francis, starting, "can such a proceeding be necessary? He surely can be in no peril."

"I know not, I know not," replied Julie d'Artonne: "he is betrayed and accused, I find, by those he trusted, Francis. My mother's maid, Marie, has just told me that she is sure Pierre Neri, his valet, has something to do with this matter, in consequence of a quarrel with your servant, Jean Marais. He was then heard to threaten that he would make his master repent the words he used, and yesterday he was absent at Riom during all the evening. I think she said he was seen going into the house of the intendant."

In broken conversation like the above passed some twenty minutes more: painful it certainly was to both of them, and

yet it was a consolation to be together. From the count to themselves, and from themselves back again to the count, their words and thoughts wandered, in no very regular form, till at length the countess returned, her eyes swollen with weeping. Sinking into a seat, Madame d'Artonne covered her face with her hands, exclaiming, "Go to him, Julie! go to him! He asks for you;" and Julie sped away without reply.

Francis de Langy remained with the countess, leaving her for some minutes to give free course to the grief with which she was oppressed, and then offering her such consolations—such poor consolations—as words can afford. Alas! they are poor indeed; for

I never yet did hear
That the bruised heart was peaced through the ear.

In moments of distress and anguish, at the time of deprivation and loss, in the bursting of the strongest and the dearest ties, in the hour of dismay and horror, there is but one comfort, one strength, one support, which the heart of man can receive; and against that too often his iron heart shuts the door, and stations the fiend Pride to guard the entrance against the friend who would console him. Who is that friend? Faith!—the angel messenger of that God who may see fit to chastise, but of whose bounty, of whose mercy, tenderness, and love, man, rebellious worm as he is—has no reason to entertain one doubt.

Such feelings of faith, however, are but too seldom admitted into the human heart in the first moment of affliction; nor was it at all likely, in that day and in that country, that they should find ready access. Nevertheless, Madame d'Artonne did strive to recollect that whatever befel her was by the will of One all-wise and all-good, as well as all-powerful, and to derive from that conviction the high consolation which it is calculated to afford.

"I know it is God's will, Francis," she said; "but yet this is terrible to bear. Still I could endure it, if he himself did not seem so painfully depressed, so utterly crushed by this horrible and unjust charge. He, who was always famous for his courage and his fortitude, seems now totally overwhelmed. You must not leave us, Francis, in this state; indeed, you must stay to give us comfort and support. Do you think they will let you see the count? That dark, deceitful man said, 'His own family—only his own family.'"

"The intendant promised I should see him," replied Francis de Langy, "and has, I believe, given orders for that purpose. But why do you call him 'deceitful man,' dear

lady? He seems to me an unpleasant one—cold, supercilious, heartless; but——”

“Oh! he is playing some deep game,” said the countess—“I know not well what. If we did know, we might frustrate it. But trust a woman’s eyes to discover when a man is insincere. She can always do it, Francis, when her own heart is not concerned. No, no; there is something beneath—I am sure there is something beneath; and sooner or later we shall discover what, to our cost.”

“How many of the *maréchaussée* are in the house?” demanded Francis de Langy, somewhat suddenly.

“I know not,” replied Madame d’Artonne; “two, I believe. There is one at the door.”

“I will inquire,” said Francis de Langy, and left the room.

He found that three of the soldiers of the *maréchaussée* had remained to keep guard alternately; and in the short space of time which he was absent from the countess, reflection showed him that a plan which had struck his mind, for seizing upon the archers and setting the count at liberty, was vain. It would have been necessary, in order to execute it, to engage every servant in the house to aid; and it was not to be hoped that they would all consent to encounter the certain punishment that must fall upon them. He therefore abandoned the idea almost as soon as it presented itself; and, returning to the countess, he endeavoured to learn from her any additional facts in regard to the death of the Marquis de Bausse. Madame d’Artonne, however, appeared to be perfectly ignorant of everything, except that the marquis had been killed by a gun-shot wound, and that her husband was charged with the deed.

But as they conversed on the subject, many circumstances in the past came back to the mind of Francis de Langy, raising up vague doubts and apprehensions which had before presented themselves to his thoughts, only to be banished as soon as revived. They now, however, assumed a more tangible form, and he felt himself compelled to look upon them carefully and firmly. First, he recollected that it was on the very day of his arrival in Auvergne that the unhappy Marquis de Bausse had been missed. Next, he remembered that Julie d’Artonne had been found fainting within a very few yards of the spot where the body had been afterwards discovered. Then he called to mind many things that had surprised him in her demeanour, much that had seemed strange in that of the count. To believe Monsieur d’Artonne guilty of so great a crime as the deliberate murder of his young relation was quite out of the question; but yet it was evident there was something strange and unaccounted for in the whole business; and the young man fell into more than one fit of

musings while conversing with the countess and waiting for the return of Julie. At length the latter appeared; and still, though she was sad and grave, her face showed no signs of tears. There seemed a deeper gloom on it than if her eyes had been streaming—a look of dark, painful anxiety, more terrible than any sorrow.

“My father has much to speak to you about,” she said: “go to him, dear Francis; go to him. I will stay with my mother till you come back. They will only let you remain half-an-hour, for the guard called me at the end of that time, and would not let me linger any longer.”

Francis de Langy hurried away and mounted the staircase, at the top of which two passages led to the right and to the left, each again turning so as to form two parallel corridors, the one on the one side, the other on the other side of the house. Just at the top of the stairs was the chamber of the Abbé Arnoux; and after passing that, on the right hand side, the first door round the angle of the corridor opened into the dressing-room of the Count d'Artonne. Francis de Langy had never been in it; but he knew the direction in which it lay, and the guard at the door was a sufficient indication. The man suffered him to enter, merely saying, “You can stay for half-an-hour, sir, and no longer,” and locking the door upon him as soon as he had passed.

The Count d'Artonne rose, and came forward to meet him as soon as he appeared. His countenance had regained all its calmness, though it was grave and sad.

“Welcome, Francis!” he exclaimed; “welcome! Come and sit down at this side of the room, where they cannot hear us through the door. I have much to say, and but little time to say it.”

Francis de Langy followed him to the extreme end of the dressing-room, and sat down with him on a small sofa near the window, which looked into the court.

“Now, Francis, listen to me,” continued the count. “I hope and trust that you will show yourself more generous to me than I have shown myself to you. This morning, in the pride of my heart, in the vanity of an unstained name and a long line of noble ancestors, I was prepared to retract my pledged word, and to refuse my daughter's hand even to the man I thought most fitted to make her happy, because it had been accidentally discovered that his birth was not as high as my own. I overlooked every noble and every fine quality, and for a name sacrificed what was just and right. Now, Francis, my pride is humbled. Charged with a dark crime, lying under strong suspicion, uncertain—nay, very doubtful—that I shall be able to prove my innocence, I come humbly to you, and ask, if you will take my child—if you will pro-

teet, support, love, and console her, whatever may happen to me."

Francis de Langy grasped his hand, with joy sparkling in his eyes which no words could express.

"To my life's end!" he replied; "to my life's end!"

The count looked down, saying, "Perhaps the one act of mine is as ungenerous as the other; but still I must do it, Francis. Yet recollect what it is you undertake. Recollect that I tell you I am doubtful—most doubtful—of being able to prove my innocence; that my days may end upon a scaffold; that shame and disgrace may fall upon my family; that my child may by the cruel law lose fortune, rank, everything but her pure high heart and noble spirit."

"Be that her dower!" replied Francis de Langy; "I ask no more of God or man."

"Then she is yours," said the count, "and I am at peace on that score. Thank you, thank you!" and he wiped away the tears from his eyes.

"As far as I can make her happy," answered Francis de Langy, "nothing shall be wanting; and though, Monsieur le Comte, I may not possess the high fortune that I once expected, yet, as the adopted son of Monsieur de St. Medard, I shall always have enough to maintain my beloved wife in a station not inferior to her birth. But tell me, Monsieur d'Artonne, what can be done for yourself?"

"Nothing," replied the count; "I am in the net of the fowler, and it is in vain to struggle and flap my wings."

"But cannot we break the net?" asked Francis de Langy.

"I fear not," answered the count; "I see not how it can be done. Would to God that it could!"

"Then would you fly if it were possible?" inquired his companion.

"Would I?" exclaimed the count, starting up; and then, immediately sitting down again, he added, "Ah! young man, you little know."

Francis de Langy paused for a moment in silence, and then in a low, quiet voice inquired, "Then I am to believe, Monsieur d'Artonne, that this charge against you is true?"

"No, no, no!" cried the count vehemently. "I am charged with murder. I am not guilty of murder. But many things can be proved against me," he continued after a moment's thought, "which will make it seem as if I were. I have not time to tell you the tale now; but these facts, Francis de Langy, can be proved: that Martin de Bausse and I had quarrelled; that he wrote me word he was coming hither on the day on which he died; that I went into the wood in which he was found at the very time that he must have been in it; that my gun had been discharged on my return; that my

coat was stained with blood, and that I brought home no game with me."

His voice sank almost to a whisper as he spoke, and after a moment's pause he added, "All this can be proved against me; and, moreover, that by his death I succeed to the estates of De Bausse. I have nought to say in reply. It is all true; and it is more than probable that, in a trial such as that which must take place, some small circumstances, some minute fact upon which I do not calculate, will be found to confirm this testimony, and, if there were a doubt before, to turn the scale against me. Julie has talked of escape, but that is impossible."

"If you could escape," asked Francis de Langy, "would not the very fact of doing so banish you for ever from your native land?"

"No," replied the count; "no. The king's pardon might be obtained."

"Pardon!" said Francis de Langy; "then are you really guilty?"

"Not guilty, young man," answered the count, somewhat sternly; "no, not guilty. It was in my own defence."

A pause of several moments took place when the terrible truth was once told. Francis de Langy gazed sadly upon the ground, without reply: not that he doubted the count's word; not that it was possible for him to suspect a man whom he so much loved and esteemed of anything like deliberate murder; but he saw at once how terribly the fact would aggravate the dangers and evils of his friend's situation. Monsieur d'Artonne, however, attributed his silence to a suspicion, and added, after gazing at him full in the face, "On my honour! on my soul! on my eternal salvation! Francis, I slew him accidentally in my own defence. Do you doubt me?"

"No, oh no!" replied Francis de Langy, taking the count's hand; "but I am sad, because his death by your hand at all renders this business more perilous."

"It is as perilous as it can be," answered the count.

"Well, then," said Francis, "there is nothing for it but to labour for your escape. I will do the best I can; but I must have some one to help me, some one to consult with. Your valet, I fear, is not to be trusted."

"The villain!" exclaimed the count; "it was he who betrayed me. Do not let him come near me, Francis, or I shall dash his brains out. No, no; but your own servant—the man who saved you and Julie; he was first suspected of the deed; he is clever, keen: he himself escaped from a prison, to avoid the wearing anxiety of moments such as these."

"I will speak with him, I will speak with him," answered Francis de Langy; "he will help me, I am sure. But I

foresee an additional difficulty: we shall have to blind this villanous valet, and doubtless his eyes are keen."

The count shook his head. "Too much so," he said; "too much so. He is one of those cold, watchful, observing fiends who mark every action of others, to use it for their own purposes. But surely he can be lured away."

"I will try," rejoined Francis de Langy. "Be you ready at a moment's notice, and believe me that I will do everything that man can do to set you free, be the risk what it may."

"And, whatever is the result," said the count, "you are Julie's husband? Is it not so, Francis?"

"On my honour!" replied Francis de Langy. "Oh! if you knew how I love her, you would not doubt it."

"And no word of reproach," continued Monsieur d'Artonne, "no cold look at the daughter of the criminal, will ever darken the sunshine of her home? Do you promise me, Francis?"

"On my life!" replied the young man, warmly. "I will love her and cherish her to the very last hour of my existence."

As he spoke, the door was unlocked, and the guard put his head in, saying, "The time is up, sir; you must come away."

"Already?" exclaimed Francis de Langy; but knowing that it was vain to resist, he bade the count adieu and retired.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE thoughts of Francis de Langy when he quitted the chamber of the count were all in a state of wild confusion. To set him free if possible he had determined, and to make every effort for that object at all risks, and whether successful or not; but what plan to pursue, or how to begin, puzzled him; and ere he had descended the stairs innumerable schemes had passed through his mind, cast aside as soon as they had presented themselves. Should he try to corrupt the guard? was the first question he asked himself; and as he passed the man who was keeping watch at the door, he scanned his countenance anxiously, to see if he could derive any encouragement from its expression. It was cold, stern, and somewhat contemptuous—the look of one long habituated to deal with scenes of crime and sorrow, hardened and acuminated by the anguish and vice which he was accustomed to contemplate. There was no hope there; and Francis de Langy recollected, that, even if one of these archers could be gained

over, it would be necessary to bribe the rest also, for it was too well known that they were universally spies upon each other.

He then asked himself whether the count's escape could not be effected by the windows of his room. He had remarked that there were no bars upon it, nor did any other obstacle exist which could prevent his egress; and after turning several more plans in his thoughts, this was the one on which his mind at length rested. In the mean while, however, he hurried towards the saloon, in the hope of finding Julie and Madame d'Artonne there; but it was vacant, and on inquiring, he learned that the grief and anxiety of the countess had at length overpowered her, and that she had been carried insensible to her room.

His next care was to seek Jean Marais; and having found him, though not without some difficulty, for the whole house was in a state of confusion impossible to describe, he called him to his own chamber, and set him to perform some trifling service, while he turned in his mind the best manner of opening to the valet the subject of the count's escape. Jean Marais, however, who, as the reader is already aware, had all his senses in a state of constant activity, saved his master a great deal of trouble by the rapidity and accuracy of his combinations. He spread out some of his clothes, as he had been directed; he rubbed the buttons with a piece of leather; he wiped the hilt of his sword, which lay upon the table; and still, as he did so, he looked at Francis de Langy with an inquiring expression of countenance, seeming to calculate what was passing in his thoughts, and arriving step by step at his own conclusions thereupon.

Now, had Jean Marais been influenced by the usual policy of persons of his class, and actuated by the desire of making the most of his services, he would in all probability have left his master to find some way of breaking the matter to him as best he could. He would have held back at every step, enlarged upon the difficulties, and enhanced the value of his assistance by the trouble of obtaining it. But Jean Marais was a good-natured soul, with what one may term a necessity of exertion upon him, which never suffered his energies to slumber; and happy it was when the object presented to them was praiseworthy, for they were certain of being employed somehow. He had a spice of vanity, too, in regard to his *savoir faire*, which rendered him always anxious to show his dexterity in everything; and in the present instance several motives made him desirous of doing something for the service of the Count d'Artonne. Gratitude was not amongst the least; for, notwithstanding a good many faults and follies, the heart of Jean Marais was more sound than his principles,

and the experience of much harshness and hard treatment through life had rendered him but the more sensible of kindness. After having worked away in his vocation, then, for several minutes, he could no longer resist his inclination to speak; and looking up in his master's face he said, "This is an awkward business, sir."

"Very painful, indeed, Jean Marais," replied Francis de Langy. "I wish to heaven something could be done to serve the count."

"So do I, sir," rejoined Jean Marais, "and I wish I could do it; for I have a great notion that I have had a hand in putting him in his present situation."

Francis de Langy started, and gazed at him with surprise. "How so?" he exclaimed, with some degree of sternness. "You surely never dared to charge him with this"—he was about to have added the word "crime," but he hesitated, and then substituted "deed" in its place.

"Oh dear, no, sir," rejoined Jean Marais. "I met the intendant in Riom yesterday, and he asked me a great many questions about this business, to all of which I gave him answers out of which he could as much draw information as you can suck honey out of a straw; but before I left him I thought I would give him something to go and sleep upon, and so I told him you were going to be married to Mademoiselle d'Artonne."

"Well!" said Francis de Langy; "what has that to do with this affair?"

"Why, bless my soul, sir!" cried Jean Marais, "don't you see that he wishes to marry her himself? Why, it is as plain as the Grand Puy! Have you not remarked how sweetly he used to talk to the count—how soft he looked whenever he mentioned her name? He smiled, sir; he actually smiled twice while he was talking to Madame d'Artonne—a thing that never happened to him in his life before. Oh, sir! that is the cause of all the mischief."

A new light broke on Francis de Langy. "The villain!" he muttered. "If such be his motives, he is worse than a murderer himself! And now, Jean, what can be done to remedy the misfortune? I see you are willing to do your best. What can be done, I say?"

"Right willing I am, sir," replied Jean Marais, "to do anything in the world; but first I must know what is wanted of me. You see, sir, the Count d'Artonne's feelings may be very different from mine. I don't enjoy a long imprisonment; I would rather have two rooms to walk in than one; I don't like an archer at the door; I am fond of stretching my legs on the side of a mountain, and have no objection to ramble by a clear stream. Monsieur d'Artonne may like to

remain where he is, or may have a fancy for the prison of Cleremont; but if I were in his situation I should wish the archers good morning, and be out of the Chateau d'Artonne before one o'clock to-morrow, at which time I heard the intendant say he would come back again."

"And so would the Count d'Artonne if it were possible," said Francis de Langy with emphasis. "Now, then, Jean Marais, how is it to be effected? The count is as anxious to escape from imprisonment as you could be. He can return to stand his trial, or pursue what course he likes afterwards; but ——"

"Oh! I have nothing to do with that," exclaimed Jean Marais: "that is his affair: and as to getting out, we'll manage it some way."

"I have been thinking," rejoined Francis de Langy, "that we might get him out of the window during the night."

"Lord bless your soul, sir!" exclaimed Jean Marais, "you forget that the window is on the steep side of the chateau. It is at least fifty feet from the ground, and there is not a ladder in the whole place fit for anything but getting down apples and walnuts. The highest of them is twenty feet, and as to making one, that's out of the question. No, sir, no; that won't do."

"Is there any possibility of bribing the guard?" asked Francis de Langy.

"They would take the money and send off messengers to the intendant," answered Jean Marais. "One might make them drunk, or stupefy them, perhaps, if one had anything to put into their drink; no: leave it to me, sir; leave it to me," he added confidently: "I'll undertake to get him out. Let me see! How does the abbé's room lie with his? Stop a minute here, and I'll be back directly."

"Stay, stay!" cried Francis de Langy. "Not a word to the abbé, mind! His religious scruples might make all knowledge of the matter painful to him."

"I learned long ago, sir," replied Jean Marais with a laugh, "never to confess any but the sins that I have committed, not those that I am going to commit;" and away he went, closing the door after him, and carrying with him Francis de Langy's sword, a roquelaure, and two or three other articles of apparel.

"A thousand pardons, Monsieur l'Abbé!" he said, as he entered the good ecclesiastic's room; "but, if you are not using the large closet here, I wish you would let me put these things in it."

"Certainly, Jean, certainly," replied the abbé, raising his eyes from a book he was reading, and dropping them again immediately. "Put them anywhere you like."

Jean entered the closet, and remained there for two or three minutes, during which time Monsieur Arnoux heard sundry knocks and thumps, which somewhat disturbed him in his studies.

"I wish you would make less noise, my friend Jean," he said in a mild tone. "My head is still very sensible of any harsh sounds."

"Ay, sir," answered Jean Marais, coming out of the closet, and regarding him with a look of interest; "it is all for want of fresh air. I heard you say yesterday that you were longing to get out; and if you could but take a turn or two, you can't imagine how refreshed and strengthened you would feel. I was just knocking to see if I could drive a nail in, to hang up the cloaks and things."

"I should like very much to get out," said the Abbé Arnoux, his mind naturally dwelling upon his own sensations; "but I could not walk above a few hundred yards."

"Oh! for that matter, there is the rolling-chair," replied Jean Marais, "which was made to draw the countess about when she was ill some years ago. Such a fine day as this, you might well get out."

"Do you think so, Jean?" asked the abbé, with the timidity of an invalid.

"I do, indeed," answered Jean Marais. "I will go and speak to Monsieur de Langy about it;" and thus saying he quitted the room.

But ere he returned to that of Francis de Langy he bent his steps to the corner of the corridor, where the guard was pacing up and down, and amusing himself by alternately shouldering and grounding his musket.

"Come, come!" cried Jean Marais in a rough tone; "I wish, Master Archer, you would make less noise. You were not put here to disturb the whole house; and you forget that the Abbé Arnoux, who is in that next chamber, is just recovering from a severe illness. He can't bear your stamping and thumping."

"Then he may change his room," said the soldier insolently. "I shall keep guard in the usual manner, whether he likes it or not."

Jean Marais turned away, muttering "*Coquin!*" loud enough to meet the man's ears; and the archer, of course, stamped ten times louder than before.

"It will do, it will do!" cried Jean Marais, after he had entered the room of Francis de Langy and shut the door: "it will do, and I will take him out before all their faces in the broad daylight."

"Come, speak reasonably," said Francis de Langy. "What will do?"

"The closet in the abbé's room," replied Jean Marais. "It has been, as I thought, nothing but a passage from one room to the other—from the abbé's room into the count's dressing-room—and it is only blocked up with wainscot. One panel taken out, and ——"

"He is safe!" exclaimed Francis de Langy.

"Not quite," answered Jean Marais. "We have many another thing to do before he can be called safe. We must make Monsieur l'Abbé a tool without his knowing it; we must blind this Peter Neri; we must find means to cut out the panel without noise: but the less you have to do with it, Monsieur le Comte, the better. Just condescend to act under my directions, and then you can conscientiously say, if you are asked, that you had no hand in it. Leave it to me, leave it to me, Monsieur, and if I fail call me a fool."

"Well," replied Francis de Langy, "I am very willing; for I am sure, Jean Marais, I can trust both to your zeal and ingenuity. What is the first thing I have to do?"

"Go and coax the good Abbé Arnoux to go out and take the air for a quarter of an hour in Madame d'Artonne's rolling-chair," answered Jean. "Old Joseph—good old Joseph—will draw it with all his heart, for he offered when he showed me the chair."

"You will get the count out in the darkness, of course?" said Francis de Langy.

"*Pardie*, no!" cried Jean Marais. "See what these young hands are! You would ruin all in half-an-hour. No, no, master of mine: in the broad daylight, under their noses, to-morrow morning about eleven o'clock. But you go and get the abbé out; we have no time to lose."

Francis de Langy did as he was required, and he found the abbé not only willing, but eager, to taste the fresh air; for since Jean Marais had hinted the possibility of his so doing, which he had never dreamt of before, that longing thirst for the free breath of heaven came upon him which every one must have experienced who has endured a tedious fit of sickness. Everything was speedily prepared, the chair brought to the door, and the abbé, in his black *soutane*, with a large cloak thrown over his shoulders to guard against cold, his head still retaining some bandages and plasters, and surmounted by an immense three-cornered hat, descended the stairs, leaning on the arm of Francis de Langy, and passed one of the *maréchaussée* in the hall.

"Who is that?" said the archer to a servant near.

"Oh, that is the abbé Arnoux," answered Peter Neri, who stood behind, evidently marking everything that took place; and Francis and his companion proceeded unquestioned.

The abbé was comfortably seated in the chair; and old

Joseph, the servant, was beginning to draw it on, when Julie d'Artonne, with her bright glossy hair flowing over her face and neck, ran out and laid her hand upon her lover's arm, saying, "Oh Francis, I was looking for you. My mother is somewhat better, and would wish to see you in her room, now that you have spoken with my father."

"I will come to her as soon as ever I return, dear Julie," replied Francis de Langy aloud; and then dropping his voice he added, in a whisper, "I am executing, my beloved, part of a plan for your father's escape. I shall not be long gone."

Julie fixed her eyes with an inquiring look upon the chair, which the old servant was now drawing on, and in which sat the abbé, so much muffled up that Julie could scarcely see his face.

"Oh, Francis!" she asked in a low tone, "is that he?"

"No, no," replied Francis de Langy; "that is the abbé. We are only taking our precautions beforehand. Go in, dearest girl, and I will be back as soon as possible."

The Abbé Arnoux enjoyed his airing very much; but in about half-an-hour he felt fatigued, and they returned to the house. In the hall they found the countess's pretty maid, who made a low and reverent curtsy to the abbé, saying, "Madame thinks, monsieur, that you would be more comfortable and have better air if you were in a larger room; so she ordered me, while you were gone, to remove your things to the chamber Monsieur de St. Medard used to have."

"The countess is most kind and considerate," replied the abbé; "and, though the room was a very comfortable one, I dare say the change will be beneficial to me. Which is the way, my child?"

"This way, sir, this way," said the maid; and good Monsieur Arnoux was soon led to his new chamber.

Weary with the exertion of the day, the abbé almost immediately retired to bed; and he remarked that during the evening his coffee was brought to him, and the arrangements of his room made, either by the countess's own *soubrette* or the faithful old servant of the family, Joseph.

In the mean time Jean Marais had not been inactive. No sooner had the abbé quitted his chamber than he had entered it with some more clothes upon his arm—a precaution which perhaps he need not have taken, as he met no one by the way, and was screened from the bow of the archer by the angle of the corridor. Jean Marais, however, knew that the slightest neglect is sufficient to ruin a goodly enterprise; and the eyes, ears, and understandings of the police in all countries except England being more active than those of other people, he certainly had cause to apprehend that, if it were possible, his proceedings would be marked and discovered.

The archer at the door of the Count d'Artonne was by no means the most obtuse of his class, and between him and Jean Marais there was likely to be a keen encounter of wits before the one could deceive the other. He had not seen the valet enter the abbé's room; but, before the latter had been there five minutes, the worthy guard's ears caught a sound that he did not approve of, and he instantly opened the door of the count's chamber and looked in suspiciously. Monsieur d'Artonne was seated at a table writing; and, raising his head sternly, he asked, "What do you want?"

"I thought you called, sir," said the man.

"No, I did not," answered the count, and the archer withdrew.

But he was not satisfied, and walking round the angle to the door of the abbé's room, he knocked with his knuckles for admission. There was no answer, and he thrust his head in. The room was quite vacant, the window open, and everything bearing so still and empty an aspect that the man was deceived, and returned to his post.

No part of his proceedings, however, had been unmarked by Jean Marais: he had heard through the panel the brief conversation between the archer and the count; he had heard the abbé's door open, and judged with the utmost nicety what was passing in the soldier's mind. The moment the man was gone, he issued forth from the closet in which he had ensconced himself, and with a noiseless step quitted the room, crept along the passage, and held a brief conversation with the countess's pretty maid, whom he found in her mistress's ante-chamber; for, full of the importance of his task, there was no place into which Jean Marais would not have entered in pursuit of his object. The maid and he by this time seemed to understand each other perfectly: their conversation was carried on in whispers, and she appeared to agree most readily to all he said, ending with the assurance that she would do anything he liked to tell her.

"Well then, my dear Marie," he added, "the first thing to be done is to get the coffee-grinder; go under the window of the corridor, opposite to the count's door, and grind away with all your might, and with as much noise as ever you can make, for the next half-hour."

"The coffee-roaster will be better," replied the girl, who seemed to have an intuitive perception of what Jean Marais wished to effect; "for then he'll smell it as well as hear it. Besides, it squeaks, and the other does not."

"Please yourself about that matter, Marie," answered Jean Marais: "only, make haste, and be ready to meet the abbé as he comes back."

In a few minutes after, the archer heard sounds somewhat

similar to those which had called his attention before. At first they seemed to proceed from the same quarter; but the next minute his notice was attracted by some fragrant odours coming through the window of the corridor near which he sat, and looking out he perceived a maid very busy roasting coffee.

"Ah! that was what I heard," he said to himself; and, discovering that the maid was young and pretty, he opened a conversation with her in a low voice.

Marie showed herself no way coy, but went on grinding and coquetting in a spirit that would have done honour to any of her race; so that, if Adam forgot his duty for a woman and an apple, the exempt seemed on the high-road to do the same for a woman with some coffee-berries. In the mean while Jean Marais continued in the closet, to which he had gone back; and when some time after he met his master, seeking the chamber of the Countess d'Artonne on his return from walking by the side of the abbé's chair, Jean whispered with a grin, "It is done!"

"What?" said Francis de Langy.

"Cutting the panel," replied Jean Marais, holding up a small steel saw and concealing it again immediately: "it is all sawn round but the eighth of an inch at each corner, and wants only the touch of a thumb to drive it into the count's room."

"But will it not fall with a terrible noise?" asked Francis de Langy.

"Ay, sir, it might," answered Jean Marais, "if I had not had as much foresight as Marshal Turenne. I screwed a brass peg into it before I began, so that I can hold it up with one hand while I push it in with the other. Everything being thus prepared, we must wait till to-morrow morning for the execution, and in the mean time I must incapacitate Master Peter for acting the spy any more. Pray, sir, where was it you walked to yesterday morning?"

"To the cottage of your friend's father, Antoine Bure," replied Francis de Langy, somewhat surprised at this abrupt question.

"I wish you would ride there to-morrow morning," said Jean Marais, "and wait till you have a messenger from me. Take the count's best and strongest horse. Do you understand, sir?"

"I think I do," answered Francis de Langy. "But I will speak more with you afterwards, Jean; I am now going to the countess."

"Say not a word, sir," whispered Jean Marais, eagerly; "never tell a man's wife how he's going to make his escape."

"Why not?" asked his master.

"Why, you have a thousand chances to one against you," said Jean Marais: "she may love him too much, she may love him too little, and at all events she is sure to wish to take leave of him; and then you have fainting-fits, and hysterics, and all that sort of thing: then he stays to see her recover, and she clings round his neck and sobs very loud; and then the guard pokes in his head, the plot's discovered, the prisoner guarded ten times more strictly than ever, and those who were helping him to escape are locked up and punished. No: you may tell Mademoiselle Julie to-morrow morning, if you like; and perhaps it would be as well if she were to ride with you."

"But why, if I inform her, may I not inform the countess?" said Francis de Langy.

"For half-a-dozen good reasons," answered Jean Marais: "first, Mademoiselle Julie is in love, and that always makes a woman a heroine as long as it lasts; then, in the next place, I am sure you would tell her whether I consented or not, and so there is no use in refusing. Besides, I think that if she goes with you it will cover your going, especially if you can get her to be very gay and cheerful this afternoon. But I will come to you in your own room about nine, sir, and we will talk about all the rest. I must beat Peter Neri to a jelly to-night, so I have some work before me."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"WHAT is this Julie tells me?" asked the Countess d'Artonne, raising her head as Francis entered the room. "Oh, Francis! will you ever be able to effect it?"

"Hush! my dear madam," replied Francis de Langy; "we must not speak one syllable upon this subject. Remember that the least word overheard, the least agitation shown, would ruin everything. Suffice it that I have seen Monsieur d'Artonne, that I know his views and wishes, and that with the most devoted zeal and eagerness I am endeavouring to execute them."

"But cannot I see him before he goes?" inquired Madame d'Artonne.

"Indeed," answered Francis de Langy, "I should think it better not. Could you, my dear madam, so command yourself, as in no degree to give way to your feelings? Remember upon how small a point his safety may depend, and then

judge whether any gratification of your affection for your husband ought to be put in competition with his safety."

"I can command my feelings, and I will," replied Madame d'Artonne: "I should like much to see him, Francis; but, if it be indeed necessary, I will forego that satisfaction. I will do anything—everything—for his sake."

"Well, then, my dear madam," replied the young gentleman, "you must in the present instance trust entirely to me: if there be a possibility of your seeing Monsieur d'Artonne, you shall do it; but if not, you must take my word for it that his safety would be compromised by the attempt. In short," he added with a smile, "you must spoil me for the next four-and-twenty hours, and so must Julie too; for the first thing I have to ask is, that she would take a long ride with me to-morrow morning."

"Indeed!" said Madame d'Artonne with some surprise. "But ought she to be absent long, Francis, with her father in such a situation?"

"She must be absent, I am afraid, several hours," replied Francis de Langy; "for, though I shall accompany her out on horseback, I shall have, I think, to return on foot."

"Oh! I comprehend, I comprehend!" exclaimed Madame d'Artonne, while a glad smile brightened Julie's face. "Yes, Francis, yes; we will trust to you for the time in everything."

"Ay," said Julie, "and not only now, but always. It was my father's last command to me to-day to look to him for protection and support, both for you and for myself, my dear mother; and where else, indeed, could I look?"

"D'Artonne mentioned something of the same kind to me also," replied the countess; "but I was agitated, and scarcely marked it—it was so contradictory, too, of what he had said in the morning."

"Yes, my dear mother," answered Julie; "but do we not see here in Auvergne one single hour cover the brightest sunshine and the richest harvest with clouds and storms, ruin and desolation? Such has been my father's fate, dear mother."

"And he is glad to take shelter, madam," said Francis de Langy, "even in an humble cottage. What I mean is, he is willing now to receive assistance which this morning he might have despised."

"Oh no, no, Francis!" cried Julie; "couple not such a word with your own name: never did he despise you in any way; he always loved and esteemed you, or he never would have promised you his daughter. It was but prejudice that interfered, and it has been scattered by the first touch of misfortune. But tell us, Francis, what is to be done next? What means have been taken for my father's escape?"

"I could explain them but imperfectly," replied Francis de Langy, "and I believe it will be better not to attempt to do so at all. They are in the hands of one to whose skill and zeal I can fully trust. I suspect that all is prepared, and that at an early hour to-morrow the count will be free. In the mean time I think it would be wise for us to affect a cheerful air, to assume that the charge is vain and ridiculous, and to make everything as far as possible resume its ordinary course."

"I cannot, I cannot!" said the countess; "with my mind so full of deep anxiety, trembling every instant for what the next instant may bring forth, I cannot cover over the emotions of my heart by any veil thick enough to hide them. I fear, too, my bodily frame would give way. You, Julie, go with Francis, and do your best to make light of the matter. Your hearts are young and buoyant. I will remain here, and seek consolation and hope in prayer."

"It is but, my dear madam," said Francis de Langy, "that by our conduct to-night we may excite no suspicion on account of our conduct to-morrow. If we seem overwhelmed with sadness now, these archers, who, depend upon it, are watching us keenly, may think it extraordinary that Julie and I should ride out so soon."

The Countess d'Artonne fully agreed in her young friend's views, and urged him to do everything to blind the eyes that were spying upon their proceedings. She even suggested that it would be better for Julie and her lover to walk out in the park that evening, and it was ultimately agreed that they should do so, though not immediately. After a protracted conversation, Francis descended with Julie to the dining-room, where they sat down together to the afternoon meal, and endeavoured, even in the presence of the servants of the chateau, to appear as cheerful and unconcerned as possible.

They both remarked, that the men who waited upon them bore a different demeanour from that which they usually displayed. It was not that they were inattentive, but the usual service of the table did not go so smoothly as was customary in the well-ordered household of the Count d'Artonne. Julie attributed it, in her own mind, to the anxiety of attached domestics for a kind and amiable master; but Francis de Langy, who knew that the schemes of Jean Marais were likely to extend themselves to the lower branches of the establishment, could not help being apprehensive lest something should have gone wrong. At length, when the dessert was set upon the table, and with it some fine wine from an estate of the count in the neighbouring province, the young gentleman directed old Joseph, who acted as *sommelier*, to ask the

archer in the vestibule if he would not take a glass of the Burgundy.

"That he will, sir, I dare say," replied Joseph, "for he did not seem much to relish the small wine at supper."

The archer verified the servant's anticipations, and, as soon as he had received the invitation, entered the dining-room, with a low inclination to Julie, and a somewhat familiar nod to Francis de Langy.

"Here," said Francis, filling his glass—"here is something to drink to the speedy liberation of the count, my friend."

"With all my heart, sir!" replied the man; "though, if I had such Burgundy as this every day," he added, as he tasted it, "I should wish him to be long under *surveillance*."

"I suppose that will not be the case," rejoined Francis de Langy in an inquiring tone; "what do you think, my good friend?"

The man grinned, as an intimation that he understood the young gentleman's intention of drawing his opinion from him unawares; but he replied good-humouredly, "I trust not, sir—I trust not: I dare say he has done nothing to deserve it, and if so, he'll soon be free."

"Well, then, Julie," said Francis, turning to his fair companion, "there can be no impropriety, I am sure, in your taking a walk out in the park, or a ride either."

"Oh, *pardie*, no!" cried the archer, who was quite ready to take his part in the conversation; "no impropriety at all. No doubt, mademoiselle, it will all go quite well with the count; and perhaps to-morrow the intendant will let him go free."

"I trust so," replied Julie; "I trust so. Well, I will walk, Francis, if you like: I will not ride to-night—to-morrow, perhaps, if you are inclined."

Francis de Langy expressed, very naturally, his willingness to do anything that she pleased; and the archer, having accepted another glass of the Burgundy, retired, suspecting nothing, notwithstanding his habits of suspicion, but quite prepared to see the two lovers go forth, on foot or horseback, at any time they thought fit. Julie went for a few minutes to visit her mother, and then returned, ready for the walk. They wandered out together into the park, going not very far, and keeping within sight of the house. There were feelings of grief and anxiety, powerful and oppressive, in the bosom of each. Since the preceding day, when, standing at the outset of a journey which they were to run hand in hand, all had seemed clear, bright, and distinct, as they gazed forward from the beginning of life through its long course, a dark, heavy cloud had fallen over the scene, hiding futurity

altogether from their view, and giving nothing but the menace of sorrow and anxiety; and yet, reader, their conversation that night, their lonely walk in the calm evening, were perhaps sweeter to both than such a moment had ever been before. Deeper, stronger love seemed to take possession of their hearts in the hour of affliction and apprehension; new bonds seemed to bind them to each other; higher emotions to spring up for their consolation and support. Have you ever, reader, seen two children, wandering forth upon a summer's day, caught by a thunder-storm in the midst of their light ramble? When the sun was bright and the sky clear, did they not go hand in hand, plucking sweet flowers, or separating to chase the butterfly? But when the cloud burst, and the thunder roared, and the rain poured down amain, they clung to each other in their infant terror, and their little arms clasped the one to the other's breast: was it not so? It is so with those who truly love, in the storms and tempests of adversity.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHILE Francis de Langy proceeded, as we have seen, to visit the Countess d'Artonne, Jean Marais went into his own room, and quietly and deliberately changed his garments. In so doing, however, it was to be remarked that he put on everything of the lightest quality that he possessed, and which might give him the freest use of his strong and active limbs.

"This is not the pleasantest part of the whole affair," he muttered to himself; "but, if I leave him an inch that's not black and blue, my name's not Jean Marais."

When this was accomplished, he descended again from his garret to the servants' dining-hall of the Chateau d'Artonne, knowing that the hour of their afternoon meal was approaching, and being well aware that, whatever confusion might reign in the house in consequence of the arrest of the count, the cook would take very good care to provide for the wants of himself and his fellow-servants. In the hall he found nobody but one of the archers and Mademoiselle Marie, the *soubrette* of the countess; and shortly after his appearance the worthy member of the *maréchaussée* took his departure, saying that he must go to relieve his companion up-stairs.

"Now, Marie," said Jean, "remember what I told you: if ever there was a spice of coquetry in woman's nature, put it forth till you have set Master Neri and the archer by the ears."

"But I may chance to make you jealous too," answered Marie, laughing.

"Not a bit, not a bit," replied Jean Marais: "there is not a grain of the yellow earth of jealousy in all the clay of which I am made. If love won't bind a woman to a man, nothing else will, Marie; so no philosopher was ever jealous in this world."

"You a philosopher!" cried Marie. "Why, who ever heard of a valet-de-chambre being a philosopher?"

"On my life, I believe they are the only true ones!" said Jean Marais. "First they see, secondly they avoid, and thirdly they take advantage of, all the follies and vices of human nature. Oh! we are great men, we valets-de-chambre: the politician carries not in his portfolio one-half the secrets that we carry in our pomatum-pots."

"And perhaps betray them as easily," replied Marie; "for I am sure we have an example in Peter Neri of what a rascal a valet can be."

"He is an exception to our general virtues," said Jean Marais. "But here comes somebody, so mind your part, Marie."

It proved to be one of the other female servants, however; and a few minutes passed ere the other archer, who had already obtained the advantage of a flirtation with the pretty *soubrette* out of the window, appeared, to carry it on in the hall. Marie followed her instructions with marvellous tact and discretion. She brought the man to her side in a moment, and kept up such a fire of

Becks, and nods, and wreathed smiles

upon him, that, before Peter Neri joined the rest of the party, the unconscious archer was fully convinced he had made a decided conquest, and was curling up his moustaches with an air of the most determined self-complacency. The valet's countenance instantly became clouded; but he sat himself down to the table with a strong resolution to keep his temper, which is generally a sign that it is likely to depart, and such was certainly the case in the present instance. Good resolutions are very dangerous things, especially in particular circumstances; and, as usual with Peter Neri, they were soon ground to atoms under the irritation which he suffered. Four or five times he launched off some bitter sarcasm at the archer on the opposite side of the table, which caused the gallant gentleman to puff out his cheeks and blow with indignation; and at length, when he beheld Marie, in order to hear some sweet words which the other whispered, approach her soft cheek so near his lips as actually to brush

his moustache, he could bear it no longer, and exclaimed aloud, "*Coquine!*"

"What sayest thou there, my friend?" cried the archer, starting up. "Do you dare to apply such a term to any lady in my presence?"

"Ay, that I do," replied Peter Neri, "and to yourself too."

"*Ventre bleu!*" exclaimed the archer, hurling a horn cup that stood at his side in the face of Peter Neri, and cutting him under the eye.

The valet was instantly springing across the table to take summary vengeance; but at that moment Jean Marais caught him round the waist, exclaiming in a good-humoured tone, "You shall not disturb our tranquillity in this way, you fool! You are always quarrelling with somebody. It was with me the other day, and now it is with this good archer. I will put you out of the hall if you are not quiet."

The tone of superiority in which he spoke but heaped coals upon the fire which was already blazing somewhat fiercely in Peter Neri's heart; and, as is usual in such circumstances, he instantly turned upon the person who attempted to interfere, exclaiming, "Fool! do you call me fool? Put me out? It's more than two such as you could do."

"I will soon show you that," replied Jean Marais. "You are a fool, and a villain too!" and he pulled him backwards from the table.

Peter Neri instantly struck a violent blow at him, which Jean Marais parried with the greatest difficulty; but in return he knocked his adversary down with a fall that made the hall ring. Up he started, however, and the former combat, which had been stopped by the arrival of the Count d'Artonne, was now renewed with greater fury than ever. But if Jean Marais had been more than a match for his adversary before, when they were both somewhat angry, he was vastly superior to him now, when he came prepared coolly and deliberately to provoke the affray in which he was engaged, and take advantage of every fault or folly his opponent might commit. The battle was not conducted in the way it would have been in this peculiarly pugilistic country; and many things were done on both sides which we, being a people famous for legislating even in our most trifling transactions, and having established a regular code for the peculiar regulation of blows and fisty-cuffs, might term unfair according to our preconceived notions. The maids screamed and agitated themselves as usual; the men-servants and the third archer, who hurried down from the vestibule above, in which he was keeping a kind of secondary watch, would have interfered to part the combatants; but

the one who had first given occasion for the fray called out loudly to let them alone, and explained to his companion that Peter Neri was an insolent scoundrel, very well deserving the drubbing that he was evidently receiving. The worthy archer, indeed, was not at all sorry that, on the present occasion, Jean Marais thought fit to act the part of a cudgel in chastising the man who had insulted him, and he was determined that no injudicious mediation should put a stop to the discipline. In the mean time the two combatants closed together, swayed hither and thither, drove the crowd of domestics from side to side and corner to corner, knocked over the stools and benches, broke platters and dishes, fell, rolled over and rose again; but still it was evident to all—and, to the credit of the servants be it said, to the satisfaction of all—that Peter Neri was getting one of the most severe thrashings that ever was received by any but an English prize-fighter.

Though smarting from many a sharp blow, it was no light satisfaction to Jean Marais to feel, by the staggering weakness of his opponent, that he himself was arriving at the consummation which he aimed at, namely, that of giving him so terrible a beating as to incapacitate him for playing the spy during many a long day to come. The combat, however, was destined to end in a manner as satisfactory, though very different from that which he anticipated. Discovering that he was overmached, and that the struggle must soon end in his total discomfiture, if he trusted alone to his skill and his physical force, and blinded with rage and disappointment, Peter Neri drew back for a moment, and gazed round with his face covered with blood, and his eyes dazzled and hazy with the blows he had received. Every one who saw him imagined that, feeling himself vanquished, he was going to retreat from the strife; and a mocking laugh ran round the hall, while Jean Marais, who was not as yet half satisfied, rushed forward to finish what he had so well begun. But the savage, stretching forth his hand to the supper-table which stood near, snatched up a large sharp-pointed knife, and darted upon Jean Marais with the spring of a tiger.

The two archers, however, who had all their wits about them, threw themselves upon him at the same moment, and prevented him from committing the act which he intended. One of them, indeed, suffered for his interposition; for, finding himself caught and frustrated, the valet turned with the madness of rage upon those who held him, and, before he could be stopped, had inflicted a severe wound with the knife on the shoulder of the man who had first provoked his wrath. He was overpowered and thrown upon the ground the next instant; the knife was wrenched from his grasp;

his arms were tied behind him with a coarse napkin; and while Jean Marais assisted the archer who had been hurt, and loaded him with extraordinary attentions and kindness, the other ran away to the vestibule, where he had left part of his paraphernalia, and returned with a pair of handcuffs, which were speedily adjusted to the wrists of Peter Neri. In this guise he was marched off by the unwounded archer to one of the garrets, and there locked in to meditate upon the result of his own conduct.

When this was accomplished the soldier returned, and found all the servants congregated round his companion, whose coat had been stripped off, and the hurt carefully examined by Jean Marais. It was an unpleasant-looking cut, partly with the side, and partly with the point of the knife, and was bleeding a good deal; but Jean, with all the skill and gravity of a surgeon, probed the wound with Marie's silver bodkin, and declared that it would have no evil result, as the weapon had been stopped by the blade-bone. Some plasters were procured from the stores of the chateau; the blood was stanchcd, though not without difficulty; and the injured part was dressed in a very scientific manner. The unwounded archer then proposed to his companion to send off to Riom for another to relieve him; but to this the man strongly objected, saying it was a mere trifle—a nothing; that he could do his work as well as ever, and adding with a grin, "You know, François, I should lose my extra pay, and all the little perquisites that are likely to fall in. No, no; let that fellow be kept locked up till the intendant comes to-morrow. If he gets out he will murder some of us."

"That he will," cried Marie, "for he is as revengeful as he is passionate. Go and wash your face and hands, Jean Marais, for you are all over blood; and I am sure I can never eat my supper if you sit opposite me such a figure. Dear me! this has frightened me out of my wits and given me the vapours."

Jean Marais did as he was told; and when he returned, though still bearing some marks of his combat about him, he was received by all with hearty congratulations; the archer whose battle he had fought shaking him heartily by the hand, and declaring he was a fine brave fellow, well worthy of belonging to the *maréchaussée*. He even offered to procure him a situation in that honourable corps; but Jean Marais, whose inclinations had a very opposite tendency, declined the distinction, saying that he could not think of leaving his young master. The supper went by in great good-humour, though it may be remarked that Marie was a little more coy towards her friend the archer than she had been before the fracas which had taken place. Both she and

Jean Marais took great care, indeed, to prevent its being apparent that there was any particular communication between them; and the evening passed over, as far as the servants and the *maréchaussée* were concerned, as if no plans, plots, or contrivances were going on in the Chateau d'Artonne.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"IN the name of fortune! Jean Marais," asked Francis de Langy, "how have you got your face so disfigured?"

"Chances of war! chances of war, sir!" replied Jean Marais, who had hurried to his master's dressing-room as soon as he saw him return from his walk with Julie. "When a man makes up his mind to thrash another, he must always make up his mind to be a little thrashed himself; but everything went better than I expected. In the midst of the skirmish, that vagabond Italian cut-throat gave one of the archers a slash in the shoulder, which, by the time to-morrow comes, will give him something to think of; and in the mean time Master Peter is accommodated in a lodging with locked doors and handcuffs on his hands—though I had put tolerable handcuffs on him too before they clasped his wrists in cold iron; and if I do not much mistake, he will find some difficulty in getting out of his bed when he is called to-morrow. I declare, sir, every blow I planted was adapted to its particular purpose with the most considerate forethought; not a movement did I make without reflection. As he might be inclined to use his eyes, I gave him a knock on each which will somewhat trouble his vision; and then, as for his tongue, which he might be disposed to use for evil purposes, not being able exactly to get at it, I determined to shatter the box in which he kept it. Three of his teeth are now upon the hall-floor. But I never saw a jaw so hard to break in all my life; it must be of the same stuff as that with which Samson killed the Philistines, for it cut my knuckles to the bone, and they are not covered with paduasoy either. But, to speak of more important affairs, sir: I am very glad you took Mademoiselle Julie out for a walk—it was the very thing we could desire; and now they will have no suspicion when you go out to ride to-morrow."

"I did it on purpose," replied Francis de Langy; "and we had one of the archers into the *salle-à-manger*, too, that he might see we took the count's imprisonment lightly."

"Capital! capital!" cried Jean Marais: "why, on my life,

sir, you are improving; you will soon be quite *affranchi*, as our good friends the jail-birds call it in their *argot*—I mean, up to every *ruse*. But I guess from what you say that you have told Mademoiselle Julie."

"I did so," replied Francis de Langy, "when I was going out with the abbé; and, what perhaps you may not like so well, before I came back she had told the countess."

"That's a pity, that's a pity," said Jean Marais: "however, what is done can't be undone, and we must make the best of it. Do you think she will be able to command herself?"

"I trust she will," replied the young gentleman; "but she is most anxious to see her husband before he goes. Can it be permitted, Jean?"

"Oh! it can be done, sir; but—" replied Jean Marais with a very doubtful shake of the head. "Yet, after all," he continued, "it will be better to let her do it; if we don't, she'll fret, and very likely do more harm in her vexation than if we consented. The archers will let her in for half-an-hour to-morrow morning according to their orders, and we must make her prepare Monsieur d'Artonne to take immediate advantage of the opportunity for escape. I will have everything ready to disguise him as the abbé; he must have a complete dress underneath, with sword, pistols, and what not; you must load yourself with all the money you can find, and have it prepared to give to him at the Huguenot's cottage; then, mounted on a strong horse, burdened with nothing but himself and louis-d'ors, if he do not speedily find his way out of this generality, it must be his own or fortune's fault."

"Dressed as the abbé?" said Francis de Langy thoughtfully: "a fear has two or three times come across my mind, Jean Marais, that your scheme will fail there. Do you not think it would be better to dress him as one of the servants?"

"Bah! master mine," answered Jean Marais, "you are little aware what stuff archers are made of. There is not a servant in the house, or in the stables, whose face, figure, and look they don't know as well as their own child's. The abbé is the only one in the place that they are not thoroughly acquainted with: him they have seen once, and then they could make nothing of him but that it was an old man in a black gown, with bandages on his head and face. They don't even know that he has changed his room; nor do any of the servants but Marie and old Joseph, for we have kept him boxed up there with none but those two to wait upon him."

"Have you let them into your confidence, then?" asked Francis de Langy.

"Not altogether," answered Jean Marais: "they know

something is going on; they are quite willing to do what I tell them to the letter—and nothing more, which is better still: so you, sir, go and make your arrangements with Madame d'Artonne; get together all the money that you can, and leave the rest to me."

"I have got two hundred louis here," said Francis de Langy; "I shall not need more than fifty till I get back to Paris, and the count can have the rest."

"That is right, sir; that is right," said Jean Marais; "a free heart becomes the young: so says the proverb, and I would add—the old, too. Doubtless, your assistance may not come amiss, for I should not suppose the count kept much money here in the chateau, and to send to Clermont or Riom is out of the question. I have but two difficulties," continued Jean Marais, after a moment's thought, "and I do not like to leave them to chance, for a neat artificer is not pleased to see any part of his work incomplete. First, how are we to account for the chair coming home empty after the abbé's airing to-morrow, or else how are we to get a new abbé to fill it? and, secondly, how are we to account for your returning home on foot when you go away on horseback? for you see, monsieur, we mustn't be content alone with getting the count off, but if possible we must prevent these gentry from knowing how he made his escape."

"Oh! I fear not for my part," said Francis de Langy; "they could but imprison me for a short period."

"No very pleasant thing either," rejoined the valet; "but that is not the only evil. For the count's own sake we must conceal the means of his escape; for if they find out the way he went, they will not be long in finding out the way to follow. Pray make the countess and Mademoiselle Julie think of that; and remember, it is as necessary to be secret afterwards as before. In the mean time I will devise some means of stopping these two gaps, and let you know to-morrow when I have slept over it."

Thus ended their conference for the time, and Francis de Langy proceeded to the apartment of the Countess d'Artonne, whom he found alone; but Julie soon joined them, and a long conversation took place, deeply interesting to all. The probability of her husband's escape, and the prospect of seeing him before he set out, seemed to give new life and energy to the countess. She assured Francis de Langy that she would use the firmest and most resolute control over her feelings, and guard every word and look, to prevent any part of her demeanour from betraying the important secret entrusted to her keeping.

"I am not so weak, Francis," she said, "but that I can take my share in aiding my husband's deliverance, and bend

every other thought to that great object. But now let us see what money we can gather together. D'Artonne luckily gave me this morning the key of his *scrutoire*; I know the private drawer where he puts the gold; and I am sure that, while searching for papers, they did not find it out."

The amount of nearly four hundred louis remained in the usual place. Madame d'Artonne and Julie contributed all they had; Francis de Langy added his share, which was received as frankly as it was offered; and after passing two or three hours together, in one of those eager conferences upon points of deep and heartfelt interest to all, which draw those who take part therein far closer to each other than any of the ordinary relations of life, the little party separated and retired, though we cannot say it was to rest. Certainty slumbers, be it certainty of happiness or of woe: it is Doubt that wakes and watches, and that sad guard sat at the pillow of each.

Early on the ensuing morning the whole household of the Chateau d'Artonne was once more on foot, and Jean Marais was soon by his master's side.

"None of us must hold long conferences together, sir," he said, "so listen while I dress you. We have each our part to play. Let Madame d'Artonne see the count for the half-hour allowed her, as soon as she has taken her chocolate. Let her tell him what we have arranged, and ask him to get himself completely ready, when the clock of the chateau strikes eleven, to cast on the *soutane*, hat, and bandages of the abbé; for at that hour precisely I will remove the panel, having found out when the archer will be changed, so that there will be none of them coming along the passage; and I have made arrangements for amusing the gentleman who will be there. He must have everything, then, that he wants to take with him, ready about him. Madame d'Artonne must wish him good-bye, neither too gaily nor too sadly. When she is gone, mademoiselle had better go to him; for, though she will meet him again afterwards, it will not look natural to go out without seeing her father. After that you can visit him, if they will let you; and surely the parts that you have all to play are not very difficult. You have only to act just as if no escape had been thought of; I will do all the rest. You and mademoiselle then set off upon your ride, wait at the Huguenot's cottage till he comes to you, and, if you can hire or borrow a horse at any of the villages, do it by all means. If not, let Mademoiselle d'Artonne come across the park by herself, and you creep round so as not to be remarked."

"Had I not better give the money to Monsieur d'Artonne when I see him in his room?" asked Francis de Langy.

"No, no, sir," replied Jean Marais somewhat impatiently: "he has got many a mile to go on foot, and it would but embarrass him till he gets his horse. You must, sir, do exactly as I tell you, or you will spoil all."

Francis de Langy promised to be tractable; and indeed the judgment which Jean Marais displayed in constructing all his plans, and adapting one part to another, convinced him that it would be better to leave the whole to his direction, without attempting to improve upon schemes already well considered. Various other minor points were settled in a few minutes; and the proposed arrangements, having been communicated to Madame d'Artonne and Julie, were shortly after put in execution. Towards nine o'clock the countess proceeded to the door of her husband's room, and asked admission of the archer.

"I don't know," said the man; "it was my comrade who had the orders, and I thought it was only yesterday you were to be admitted."

Madame d'Artonne remonstrated in a tone of distress and mortification, which touched even the heart of an archer, supposed in general to be somewhat harder than the nether millstone.

"Well, well," he replied, "you can call him up to answer for himself; he is but in the vestibule."

Madame d'Artonne did as he suggested; the answer of the other archer was favourable, and the door was opened to give her admittance to her husband. The limited half-hour soon passed; and when the guard summoned her forth she came readily, saying, "Adieu then for the present; I will tell him what you say."

She had evidently been weeping; but the guard thought that so natural that it excited less attention than if she had come away without any signs of emotion. Julie next applied for admission, and no difficulty was made either in regard to her or Francis de Langy. When she took leave of her father, the count said aloud, "Oh! go by all means, Julie, if you like; there cannot be the slightest objection: the intendant will most likely stay some time when he comes, and you will be back before anything is decided."

Francis de Langy did not remain the full half-hour; and as he opened the door to depart, the archer heard the count call after him, "Give my best regards to the abbé, and tell him that I rejoice to hear he is so much better, but he must not fatigue himself too much at first."

We need not tell the reader that the count was acting a part, and that the words he uttered, as so frequently happens even in the ordinary communication of man with man, were words uttered for effect. Were we to sift the conversation

that we daily hear, how much truth, I wonder, should we find? How much would be positively false? how much indirectly, so? how much would be a lie told? how much a lie implied? how much a lie acted? for in this abode of deceit, our looks, our tones, our gestures are as often principals as accessories in the crime.

The archer had no key to the cipher, and therefore, although his trade was suspicion, he paid no great attention to the natural words which he heard, and in a few minutes after the sound of horses' feet caught his ear. Putting his head out of the window, he gazed forth upon the terrace, and saw Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne riding slowly away. Then, resuming his seat, he amused himself with rubbing some spots off his musket, till the time came for him to be relieved, when he went down into the vestibule, while the man who had been wounded by Peter Neri took his place above. The latter had not been long at the count's door before the sound of the coffee-roaster was again heard, and the fragrant smell rose up to the window.

"Ha, ha!" said the amorous archer; "I wonder if they roast coffee in this house every day, or whether *la belle Marie* wants another quiet chat with me from the window?" and leaning out, he gave the pretty *soubrette* a *bon jour*, the answer to which was accompanied by a gay and pleasant glance of a pretty black eye.

Oh! if people would but be warned by the example of Samson, young men and old, strong men and weak would not so often hear the cry of "The Philistines are upon thee;" and in the present instance by attending to it the archer might have escaped dismissal from the force of the *maréchaussée*. While he pursued his flirtation, the guard below sought entertainment the best way he could. He threw out a handful of peas, of which he found a flower-pot full in the vestibule, to some pigeons, which came strutting about upon the terrace, and seemed looking for some accustomed hand to feed them. He then admired their glossy changing-coloured necks, their pink feet, and carnation eyes; he thought them very pretty birds indeed; and if ever idyls had proceeded from the *maréchaussée*, the archer might have become poetical upon pigeons, or written as good pastorals as anybody.

In two or three minutes, however, the pigeons and his poetry were put to flight by old Joseph wheeling up the countess's rolling-chair, in which the abbé had gone out the day before. The good servant did not seem to have a very well-contented countenance; and, passing the archer in the vestibule, he hallooed down one of the passages, "Jean! Jean! Jean Marais! I wish you would draw Monsieur l'Abbé.

I am an old man and you are a young one, and it makes my arms ache."

"Oh! I will draw him," exclaimed the voice of Jean Marais from the end of the passage. "Is the chair there?"

Joseph replied that it was; and, saying that he would call the abbé, the valet crossed the vestibule and mounted the stairs, while his companion retreated on the other side. When about two minutes had elapsed, a slow and heavy foot was heard coming down; and leaning feebly upon the arm of Jean Marais, appeared the form of an old and somewhat decrepit man, with plasters upon his face and bandages round his head, making themselves very evident from under a black silk nightcap, which was surmounted by a large three-cornered hat. The archer rose and bowed to the abbé; but the good old man was seized with a fit of coughing, and only acknowledged his civility by a sign of salutation, putting his hand into his pocket at the same time, and drawing forth a handkerchief, with which he wiped his mouth. Tottering feebly on to the door, he approached the side of the chair; and the good-natured archer, seeing him so weak, stepped forward, to the consternation of Jean Marais, in order to give him support by taking his left arm.

"Have a care! have a care!" cried the valet in a voice of great apprehension; "that's the side where his arm was broken;" and, interposing suddenly between the abbé and the archer, he set his heel upon the toe of the latter with a vigour that nearly crushed it off. The guard danced, and swore most profanely; and Jean Marais, appearing horrified at what he had done, caught him by the two elbows with an air of vast concern, exclaiming, "*Ah, mon cher!* I beg you ten thousand pardons; how could I be so clumsy? I hope I have not hurt you much."

The archer set his teeth hard together to master the pain, leant upon the friendly valet for a moment, and then hobbled back into the house, seeing in the mean time that the abbé had comfortably seated himself in the chair, and replying, "It's nothing, it's nothing; it will soon be off. *Sacre die!*"

Jean Marais looked after him with a glance inexpressibly comie; and then, taking the long handle of the chair, he began to draw the abbé slowly along.

As they passed the spot where Marie was roasting the coffee, the girl got up and made a low curtsy to the abbé, looking as demure as if he had been her father confessor; while he inclined his head, saying, "*Bon jour, ma fille!*" and was pulled on by the stout arms of Francis de Langy's valet.

When they had proceeded a little farther, Jean quickened his pace; and as soon as the trees concealed from them the chateau, he broke into a trot, till they reached a spot at the

farther extremity of the park, where a gate led out upon the mountain. At that door appeared, somewhat panting and out of breath, no other than old Joseph himself, with a friar's grey gown over his arm; and forth from the chair sprang the pretended Abbé Arnoux, rapidly beginning to divest himself of the garments in which he was disguised. As fast as he pulled them off, old Joseph put them on, and the whole process was completed without the exchange of a word. Joseph made a better representative of the Abbé Arnoux than the count had done; and Monsieur d'Artonne, when the cowl was drawn over his head—for doing which there was a good excuse in the heat of a summer's day—passed very well as a stout friar.

Master and servant stood and gazed at each other for a single moment in silence, and then the count stretched forth his hand, grasping that of old Joseph with kindly warmth. "Joseph," he said, "I need not tell you to stay by your mistress whatever happens. She may be the object of persecution, as I should have been if I had remained, because——"

"Because you choose to give your daughter to an honest man, and not to a scoundrel," added Jean Marais.

The count started. "How do you know that?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, sir, half the wisdom in the world is guess-work," answered Jean Marais; "and one could see the intendant's manœuvres, notwithstanding all his quiet looks.—But we must not talk, Monsieur le Comte; the sooner you are through that door the better."

"Well, well," said the count; "only remember, I charge both my wife and daughter never to yield to the schemes of that man, let them produce what they will. Adieu, Jean Marais! perhaps the day may come for me to thank and reward you properly. In the mean time——"

"Bah, Monsieur le Comte!" cried Jean Marais. "You set me free; I set you free; the account is squared. When next we meet we will begin a new one. But, pray go!"—and pushing open the door, he saw Monsieur d'Artonne pass through, and closed it upon him.

The count walked forward two or three hundred yards, then climbed a little rocky bank, and looked back. He could see the chimneys and the tall roofs of the Chateau d'Artonne, the multitude of weathercocks flickering in the wind, and part of the window which lighted the chamber of his boyhood. There are moments and circumstances in which the whole events of our past life, the emotions, the thoughts, the hopes, the fears, rise up like spectres from the tomb of the past, and stand before us, pale and thin, but distinct and tangible

—a crowd of things long forgotten, but soon reawakened at the call of Memory, and each having a voice full of melancholy tenderness. It was one of those moments with the Count d'Artonne: forty years passed before him as he stood there and gazed, with their joys and their sorrows, their animosities and affections, the games of childhood, the sports of youth, the love of manhood, and the parent's thrilling hopes—with words, and looks, and tokens that were gone, he thought, for ever. A tear rose in his eye, and dashing it away, he cast memory behind him with a sigh, and strode on upon the forward path.

In the mean while the old servant took his place in the chair, and Jean Marais drew it back again down the hill. They stopped before the chateau; and both looked round, with a somewhat eager and anxious glance, to see if any signs of bustle and confusion were there, to indicate that the count's escape had been discovered. All was quiet and calm; the archer was still sitting in the vestibule, pitching peas, one at a time, out of a side window to a pigeon, which seemed to enter into the spirit of the joke, and stood upon tiptoe, with outstretched neck, looking for another. The pretended abbé passed across the hall with steps really feeble and shaking, while Jean Marais aided him to the top of the stairs with a firm hand, and a sort of triumphant scorn at the archers he had outwitted. To put the finishing touch to the picture, however, he descended again to the vestibule, and called out along the lower passage, "Joseph! Joseph! Where is the old fellow? I have dragged that thing for him long enough; I am not going to pull it round to the stables. Joseph! Joseph!"

"Coming! coming!" cried the voice of Joseph, from the back-stairs, and presently he came, hurrying along the passage. "You should not make such a noise, Jean Marais, when my mistress is so anxious."

They had both nearly laughed at the farce they were playing; but, repressing the smile, Joseph took the chair and drew it away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

JULIE D'ARTONNE and Francis de Langy rode on, at first quick and impetuously, but then slow and calmly, as they came within a mile or two of the Huguenot's cottage, and knew that they would have to wait some time ere they could even guess whether the count's escape had been effected or not. Their conversation was like the pace at which they went, first eager and hurried, then tranquil and slow; but, reader, it was not sad: it would have required more years, and more experience and anguish, to make them sad; not the sudden disappointment of some expected joys, but the slow, wearing disappointment of all the fond anticipations of the heart—of the confidence of youth—of the trust in friendship, in zeal, in honour—of the warm affections—of the bright hopes of mortal life's enjoyments—of tranquillity—of peace, of all—all those dreams, in short, which man fondly, foolishly sets his heart upon on this side of the grave.

As it was, there was a storm around them; but to the bold heart of undaunted youth the lightnings are but the fireworks of the sky, the thunder is but the deep bass notes of nature's mighty music; and there is a joy—a wild, eager, enthusiastic joy—in facing the tempest and sporting amidst the crash of elements. Though we may prefer the sunshine, yet we can find pleasures in the storm; for youth, happy youth, is the true bee which can extract sweets from all things.

"Alas, Francis!" said Julie d'Artonne, as they checked their horses into a slower pace, "what changes have happened since first we met! Before that afternoon my life had seemed to pass away like a summer morning; I can hardly recollect ever having shed a tear or felt an apprehension. We were all so happy and so calm! Day after day went by without a difference, and I thought that the whole of existence was to be the same. But from that time to this there has been scarcely an hour which has not brought forth something new—some great delight, such as I never knew before, some terror, or some sorrow."

"And would you go back again, Julie?" asked Francis de Langy; "would you wish that the last three months could be done away, and that you were the calm, happy girl you were before I came hither?"

"Oh, no!" replied Julie, "I cannot wish it, though perhaps I ought, for the sake of others rather than myself; but

yet I could never do away all the feelings that I have now; and if I could restore all else to the same state, I am sure my own mind would have a want, a longing for thoughts and sensations which did not exist in those times. I do not know how it is, Francis, but I regard most things now very differently: everything that I see, everything that I hear, seems to appear in another light, just as the mountains, the rocks, and the trees, look quite different in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening."

"I feel it too, dear Julie," replied Francis, stretching out his hand to her; "I feel it too, and the new light is love; but I would not part with that light, Julie, either for the calm sunshine of former days or for the brightest lustre that fortune can give."

Julie looked down for a moment, the colour somewhat heightened in her cheek. "Nor I," she murmured in a low tone; "nor I. And yet, Francis," she added, "many terrible changes have happened, too. I wonder what will come next."

"I care not, Julie," replied Francis de Langy. "So that you are mine, and I am always with you, to protect, to cherish, to support you, I cannot think that there can be any situation in life which would not have its happiness for us. Indeed, Julie, indeed there seems to me a strange sort of satisfaction, which I cannot account for, in having the opportunity of loving so dearly as I love you amidst dangers, difficulties, and anxieties. When I thought I should lose you, then all was dark and terrible indeed; but now that you are mine, certainly mine, that blessing seems to be doubly sweet from its contrast with all that is taking place around us. Come what may, our mutual affection shall guard us against sorrows such as others feel, and out of the difficulties and dangers that surround us we shall gather materials for happiness, as I have heard my uncle say that the inhabitants of the frozen zone render their warm cabins impervious to the cold wintry blast by covering them thickly with the snow itself."

So reasons youth. Ay, reader, and it reasons justly, too; for those who have known what it is to have loved truly and well, will recollect that, under the touch of sorrow—which every one is destined to feel more or less—the tender and the true affection has burned out with brighter lustre from the dark things that surrounded it. All ordinary stones we back with tinsel; we set the diamond upon black: the lighter affections may gleam with borrowed rays from the glittering things of prosperity; true love, the beacon of life, shines most brilliantly in the darkest night. Julie, too, felt that it was so; and with such words and anticipations of the future,

gathering firmness from each other, they rode on, till at length they reached the place of their rendezvous, and there dismounted to await the coming of the count. They were somewhat embarrassed, indeed, as to whether they should approach the cottage or not; for Francis de Langy feared to risk the secret of the count's escape, and the direction which he took, with any one; and he felt inclined to wait at the end of the little lake, where the count might mount his horse without being absolutely recognised. The warning of Jean Marais, however, not to deviate in any respect from the plan arranged, came back to his mind; and he was still hesitating how to act, when the matter was in some degree decided for him by the old peasant, Antoine Bure, coming out of his cottage and walking round to meet them.

"Good morning, sir," said the farmer in a grave tone; "good morning, mademoiselle. Had you not better put the horses up in my cow-shed?"

Julie looked at Francis de Langy, and after a moment's hesitation he replied, "I think we will; but we will not unsaddle them, nor take the bits out of their mouths, for we shall soon be going."

"I had better give them a little corn," rejoined the old man in a peculiar tone, "or some black bread; they will be all the fresher for it by-and-by."

"Oh, they will not need it, I dare say," replied Francis de Langy with a careless air; "their day's work will not be a hard one."

"Perhaps it may, sir," replied the man: "when we set out to ride, we never can tell how far we may have to go. My son was down at the chateau last night," he continued, "and I was sorry to hear the news."

Francis de Langy judged from these words that Jean Marais had made a confidant of Antoine Bure; but the events of the last few days had taught him caution, and before he held any further conversation upon the subject of his present business, he asked, "When was your son there?"

"About three o'clock," replied the Huguenot; and as that was long before Jean Marais had settled his plan, Francis saw that his suspicion must be incorrect.

The next words of the old peasant, however, puzzled him still more. "If you and mademoiselle," he said, "will take two of our rods and lines, you may catch some good trout in the lake. If any one passes, he will make no observation, and from the far end there you can look down the valley. Then, when you judge that either or both of the horses will be wanted, hold up your hand so, and I will put the bits in their mouths in a moment. In the mean time let them feed."

"Only one will be wanted in haste," replied Francis de Langy, seeing evidently that, from whatever source the man's suspicions arose, it would be vain to try to deceive him, even before the arrival of the count. He accordingly gave him the bridles of the horses, and, following him to the stable, found there, besides the yoke of oxen with which he ploughed, a tolerably good horse of the country, small, but strong.

The fishing-lines, and two long white wands which served for rods, were speedily procured from the cottage; and, going down to the farther end of the lake, Francis cast the hooks unbaited into the water, and commenced his watch with Julie. Such an occupation naturally led their conversation to the fate and future fortunes of the count.

"How shall we hear of him, how shall we see him, hereafter?" said Julie, when they had spoken upon this matter for some moments.

"He will find the means, I trust," replied Francis de Langy. "He will always know where to hear of or to communicate with you; though, of course, for some time his own place of residence must be kept a secret. However, dear Julie, I hope his absence will not be long, for he seems confident of obtaining a pardon from the king."

Julie shook her head sadly. "He did not seem confident with me, Francis," she answered: "he thought of going to England, and talked of our having to follow him thither."

"Well," replied Francis de Langy; "one country is as good to us as another, Julie. Though England be but a dull and dreary land, with little of the clear air and bright sunshine of our dear France, yet I have heard my uncle say that there is a great deal of good amongst the people; and wherever you are I shall find sunshine."

"And can you consent to abandon your country for me, Francis?" asked Julie. "But what will your parents say?"

Francis shook his head with a sad smile. "You forget, Julie," he answered: "they deny that I have any parents, for they wish to take from me those whom I have ever looked upon as such, and I will never acknowledge any others. It is strange, Julie, that in one day such misfortunes should fall both upon you and me."

"I trust it shows that we are destined to comfort one another, Francis," replied Julie d'Artonne. "But do you not think my father is long in coming?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Francis de Langy: "you must recollect we set out before him, and rode fast a part of the way."

Another half-hour passed, and yet the count did not appear; another, and Francis de Langy himself began to grow uneasy. At the end of two hours both Julie and himself

almost gave way to despair. At length, however, they saw something moving on the side of the hill, high up, just where the green turf was broken by some craggy rocks. It was the first living creature, except the old Huguenot, who had once or twice looked out of the stable, which they had seen since they commenced their watch.

"What is that?" asked Julie, pointing to it.

"I have remarked it for some time," said Francis. "I think it is a man; but yet — There are two men, I believe."

"Yes, yes!" cried Julie, "there are two men. See! one of them comes partly down the hill. It cannot be my father; he would be alone."

As she spoke, one of them descended about a hundred yards, then paused and gazed around him. The moment after, he seemed to make a signal, and the other followed. After halting for a short space of time, the person who had at first remained above began to descend; and when he had gazed a little longer, Francis de Langy said, "It must be your father, Julie, he comes so cautiously." As he spoke, he made the sign to the old Huguenot to put the bit in the horse's mouth.

"It is not like my father," remarked Julie, watching the figure as it descended towards the path.

"He is probably disguised," replied her lover; "for in the neighbourhood of the park he would be very likely to meet people who might recognise him. This looks like a monk, but yet I think you will find it is the count. See! he is coming straight towards us."

With a quick step the pretended friar came on, but still Julie did not dare to give way to the feelings of her heart. The moment after, however, he threw the cowl back from his head; and darting forward she cast herself upon her father's bosom, and wept with a heart relieved. The count pressed her in his arms, and for an instant he too yielded to his emotions and their tears mingled together.

"Come, my dear sir; come," said Francis de Langy, taking the hand the count held out to him: "I shall not think you safe till I see you on your horse's back."

"Yes, yes!" cried Julie, unclasping her arms and leading him on by the hand.

"Thank you, Francis! thank you!" replied the count emphatically, as they walked on with a hurried pace. "Misfortune, they say, tries our friends. Oh! may I ever find so many come out bright from that trial as I have done this day! A young man on the hill there," he continued, "watching for me, it seems—though by whose orders I know not—has saved me from the greatest danger that I have yet met

with, and led me round, out of the way of a troop of the *maréchaussée*, who were conveying some robbers to Clermont. Once beyond those dark hills," he added, looking up to the mountains before him, "and I am safe."

"You must lose no time," said Francis de Langy. "At two the intendant is to be at the chateau; it is now upon the stroke of one: your absence will be immediately discovered, and instant pursuit take place."

"Quick, quick, my dear father!" cried Julie: "see! the old man is bringing up the horse."

"I think he may be trusted," observed Francis de Langy; "but at all events we had no choice, for he seemed already warned of the whole affair, and prepared to assist us."

"You can trust him," replied the count; "I have heard the highest character of his honesty and fidelity, which was the cause of my protecting his family when the bigots down at Riom persecuted them on account of their religion. How he heard of my escape I know not, for Jean Marais did not mention that he had told him; and yet the young man said his father had sent him to watch for me. Good morning," my good friend," he continued, addressing old Antoine Bure. "and many thanks for your help. You have executed your directions most kindly."

"No one gave me any directions but my own heart," replied the old man. "God speed you, sir! Mount the horse quick, and away! Some time or another I will tell you how I guessed all this. But will you ride in the monk's gown, noble count?"

"I have no hat with me," said the count, "otherwise I would throw it off."

"I have a hat," answered the old man, "but it would not fit you. Yet stay: now I think of it, I have a Basque *berret*. Many gentlemen wear them in the south."

"Fetch it, fetch it quick!" cried the count; and, while he was gone, Monsieur d'Artonne cast off the monk's gown, and appeared in a brown suit, with a short riding-sword by his side.

"I must load you with these, my dear sir," said Francis de Langy, producing the bags of louis-d'ors which he had brought with him.

"Thanks, thanks, dear Francis!" answered Monsieur d'Artonne: "this, properly used, is as good as the invisible cloak of the fairy tale. Under cover of this, I shall pass unseen through many a dangerous place. Ha! here is the *berret*; but still I will take the monk's gown with me, in case of need;" and, rolling it up, he strapped it at the back of the saddle.

He then held Julie to his heart again for a moment, and

whispered some words in her ear; after which he placed her hand in that of Francis de Langy, saying, "I give you to him! You are his wife! Mark, Antoine Bure, and remember, in case of need: I have given her to him. Good-bye, my friend!" and he held out his hand to the old man.

The Huguenot caught it and kissed it, exclaiming, "God bless you, noble sir, for all you have done for me and mine! Some day I may do more for you than this."

The count sprang upon his horse, waved his hand to Julie, and rode away up the mountain path, while his daughter gazed after him till the wild rocky scene hid him from her sight; and then, resting her head upon her lover's shoulder, she gave her tears free course. The old peasant stood by in silence till she raised her head and wiped the drops away again; but then he spoke to her kindly, saying, "Come in and rest, mademoiselle; you need some comfort."

"We had better, I suppose, get home as soon as possible," answered Julie, looking at Francis de Langy. "But how are you to return, Francis? You have no horse."

"Here is one at his service," exclaimed the old man; "he can send it back when all inquiry is over. I shall not want it. Good life! I could trudge all my days on foot to serve the count."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Julie, to whose heart such expressions of attachment came with tenfold sweetness at a moment like this, when misfortune was lowering over her father's head, and he was flying from a dark and terrible charge.

Francis de Langy gladly availed himself of the old man's offer; Julie washed her eyes in the lake; the horse was brought out in a few minutes, and riding back by a circuitous path, so as to appear to come from a different side of the country, the two lovers returned to the Château d'Artonne, which they reached before the intendant had made his appearance. Everything was still and quiet, and it was now evident that the escape of the count was secure. Julie hastened to her mother; and Francis de Langy, after giving the horses to Jean Marais, who was watching, to the Abbé Arnoux, whom he found quietly reading, unconscious of all that had taken place except the arrest of the count, which would have horrified the good old man very much, had he not, in the simplicity of his heart, treated the charge as something so completely ridiculous, that he looked upon the fact of Monsieur d'Artonne being confined to his chamber as merely some form of law, from the operation of which he would soon be released.

On the situation of Francis de Langy, indeed, he had been pondering with his own quiet earnestness; and bringing the

conversation gradually round to that subject, he demoiselle into a minute account of his own conclusions, and the upon which they were formed, when the noise of whorant of voices speaking caught the young gentleman's ear, denouncing that the intendant had arrived. It may easily be supposed that the whole attention of Francis de Langy was now turned another way, and that he listened eagerly for every sound in the chateau. The abbé continued to speak, but not a sentence was comprehended by his young auditor, till at length the voice of the intendant was heard halloeing loudly from the top of the stairs, other tongues answering from below. Ten minutes of silence next ensued, and then the door of the abbé's room was thrown open, giving admission to Marie and the countess's maid, who, with a face as pale as death, besought Francis de Langy to go to the saloon—adding in a significant tone, "The count has made his escape, sir, and the intendant is threatening madame in a very violent manner."

Francis de Langy waited to ask no questions, but sprang down the stairs, and proceeded at once towards the room to which he had been directed. He found three or four archers at the entrance, but he passed through them unopposed; and, throwing open the door, he beheld a scene which made his young and impetuous blood boil in his veins.

The countess was standing leaning upon her daughter, with a face as pale as ashes, and a frame trembling with agitation. Julie seemed more calm and firm, but was still evidently alarmed and grieved; while the intendant, with all his usual cold and tranquil indifference of aspect cast aside, was speaking to both in a tone which no man should use towards a woman, with a raised hand and flashing eye, as if he would fain have struck them.

"I insist upon your answering, woman!" he cried. "Where is he? Whither is he gone? If you answer me not this instant, I will send you off to the common prison of Clermont, and thrust you among the felons!"

Francis de Langy caught these words as he entered; and, walking up to the intendant, with a brow as haughty and as fierce as his own, he exclaimed, "Silence, sir! and for the future use another term to these ladies, or I will chastise you on the spot. How dare you—a pitiful *maître de requêtes*—how dare you use such language to the Countess d'Artonne? You dare not for your life do what you say, let the offence be what it may.—What is the matter, Madame d'Artonne?" he added, recollecting himself, while the intendant gazed upon him in utter astonishment, never believing that he would venture to take so high a tone, unless he was sure of some powerful support. At the words, "What is the matter?"

whispered to the intendant by a great effort resumed his calm-hand in the least in a degree, though his cheek remained flushed him! His eyelids quivered eagerly.

"What is the matter!" he exclaimed, with a scornful look. "Then I suppose, sir, you mean to tell me that you are ignorant of the count's escape?"

"The count has escaped?" said Francis de Langy. "I am very glad to hear it! Doubtless, he has been driven to that step by such violence and unjustifiable threats as we have just now witnessed. This shall be reported to the king by Monsieur de St. Medard, who is now with him, and we will see whether our great monarch will suffer such conduct in one of his officers."

"I use no threats, sir," replied the intendant, not exactly liking his position. "Why should I use threats to the Count d'Artonne—to these ladies—when I am armed with powers quite sufficient for all the purposes of justice?"

"I really do not know why, sir," answered Francis de Langy. "You may have private motives that I know not of: I was not present at your last conversation with the Count d'Artonne; but I have heard you use threats to these ladies, couched in coarse and ungentlemanly language."

"No, sir; no!" exclaimed the intendant. "I only told them the consequences of their conduct; I only informed them of what must result if they refuse to tell where the count is concealed, or whither he is gone. I put the same question to them now; I put it, sir, to you; for, doubtless, you have not been without your share in aiding the count's escape from the room in which he was confined. I ask you all, where is he concealed, or whither is he gone?"

"If they can tell you," replied Francis de Langy, "it is more than I can. I am not in the least aware where he is concealed or whither he is gone. I can safely swear it at this moment. Do you know, Madame d'Artonne?"

"No, indeed," said the countess. "I do not mean to say that I did not know he intended to escape, for he spoke with me on the subject; but I did not aid his escape in any degree, and I have not the most distant idea of where he is."

"How did he escape, then?" demanded the intendant, fixing his eyes upon her sternly. "That, at least, you must know."

"Why, you yourself told me, sir," replied the countess, "that he had sawn out a panel between his chamber and the next. Did you not say that you found the small saw on the table?"

The intendant mused for a moment; and, seeing the impolicy of the violence to which he had given way, for the first time perhaps in twenty years, he turned towards Julie,

and in a softer tone demanded, "And you, Mademoiselle d'Artonne—do you know?"

"No, indeed," answered Julie; "I am perfectly ignorant of where he purposed going to. Believe me, sir, if I did know, I would not deny it. I might refuse to tell you where, but I would acknowledge the fact."

"It is impossible to suspect you of want of candour, mademoiselle," replied the intendant, bowing low; "and if, under the irritation of an event for which I shall be made responsible, I have spoken anything rash or harsh, I am extremely sorry for it. It must be excused in a man of quick and hasty temper, like myself."

Francis de Langy could scarcely refrain from smiling, to hear the intendant assume a character which he fancied the most opposite to his real one; but there was more truth in what that functionary said than what the young gentleman believed. He was by nature fierce and impetuous in many of his passions, and the external coldness under which he veiled them was the fruit of consummate art.

After a moment's pause—for neither Julie nor Madame d'Artonne made any reply—the intendant proceeded. "Having made this atonement, madam, for anything hasty I may have said or done, I must take measures to execute my duty in a manner which, I fear, you may consider stern. You all assure me, in the most solemn manner, that you know not where the Count d'Artonne now is. Is it not so?"

"Most assuredly," answered the countess; and her daughter and Francis de Langy made the same reply.

"Under these circumstances," continued the intendant, "it is not probable that Monsieur d'Artonne will be long without holding some communication with his family; and I shall consequently be obliged to put guards upon this house, and hold everybody that it contains under the *surveillance* of the police."

"Do you mean to say," asked Madame d'Artonne, "that we shall be kept here as prisoners, and debarred the privilege of air and exercise?"

"Oh, no," replied the intendant; "far be it from me to be so wanting in courtesy. I will send up a sufficient body of archers, within two hours, to afford an attendant to each individual who may choose to go out. This is a necessary precaution, which cannot be dispensed with."

"But, sir," said Francis de Langy, "am I to suppose that, if summoned to Paris—which I expect to be the case every day, as a great change in my circumstances has taken place—am I to consider, I ask, that I am to be detained here in Auvergne? If so, I had better write to Monsieur de St. Medard at once, to let him know my situation."

The intendant paused, and looked at the young gentleman from head to foot with a look of cold and somewhat scornful consideration. He would fain have kept him there, in the hope of detecting him in some communication with the Count d'Artonne, which might afford a fair excuse for taking vengeance on him for his late interference. But the worthy magistrate, with his own particular views, was little inclined to detain Francis de Langy in the same house with Julie d'Artonne; and, obliged to sacrifice one object or the other, he gave up revenge, hoping that another opportunity might occur, where no superior consideration would interfere to prevent his obtaining it effectually.

He accordingly replied at length, "No, sir: it is not by any means my purpose to interfere with your proceedings, further than to guard, as it is my bounden duty to do, against any evasion of justice. Should you, therefore, deem it necessary to leave this place for Paris—which, considering the absence of Monsieur d'Artonne, might perhaps be most prudent and consistent with propriety—you are free to follow that course, doing me the honour of taking an archer with you as far as the limit of this generality."

"To that I can have no objection," replied Francis de Langy, smiling. "My going will depend entirely upon the letters I receive from Paris; for, as to the considerations of propriety you talk of, I suppose, sir, to your other titles of intendant of justice, police, and finance, you do not add that of intendant of propriety also."

He spoke scornfully, for there was a bitter and angry feeling in his bosom towards the intendant: not so much from his conduct to Julie d'Artonne and her mother as from a knowledge of his views respecting her he loved, which mingled the fiery hatred of rivalry with many another sensation.

When he had done he turned towards the window, and made some observation to Madame d'Artonne upon the weather in an indifferent tone, which might have been galling to some men in the intendant's situation, but which produced little effect upon him. The countess and Julie, indeed, could not so far control their emotions, or cast off the thought of what had just passed, as to assume the same easy tone as their companion; and while the intendant remained, which was for about half-an-hour longer, they continued silent and grave, watching his coming in and going out of the room with apprehension and anxiety.

In the mean while that officer proceeded to confer with the agents he had brought with him; the whole chateau was examined, many of the servants were cross-questioned, archers despatched on horseback to search the country round,

and the three who had been stationed in the house subjected to a severe interrogatory. A brief inquiry was also made into the case of Peter Neri, which was perhaps the subject of all others most likely to bring suspicion upon Jean Marais. But the guards gave their account of the affair; and the one who had been wounded, in his rancour towards the valet, threw out a doubt as to whether he had not contrived his master's escape, and furnished him with the small steel saw which had been found upon the table. "Otherwise," he asked, "why should he have picked a quarrel with me, who did nothing to offend him?"

The intendant mused, and in the end ordered the valet to be removed to Riom, to which place he himself followed soon after.

CHAPTER XXXIII

EARLY on the following morning the usual packet of letters arrived from Riom. They had all been opened; for those were days in which, though men were beginning to murmur under the oppression of an old and worn-out system, and a kind-hearted and generous monarch was steadily, though slowly, improving the institutions of his country, private rights were still little respected; and the French post-office had almost as small a share of good faith as it has at times displayed since a revolution which gave political liberty to the people, but left them utterly destitute of anything like personal freedom. Several of these letters were addressed to the Count d'Artonne; one to the countess, from some gay friend in the capital, full of jest and gaiety. Oh! how harshly does the merriment we once delighted in grate upon the ear in the time of sorrow and anxiety! There was one, too, addressed to Francis de Langy, in the handwriting of the Viscount de St. Medard; and, as it told its own tale more briefly than we could explain it, we will give it here as it was written.

MY DEAR FRANCIS,—In addition to the disagreeable intelligence which I had to communicate to you two days ago, I have now to give you a piece of news which I will not affect to believe can be anything but painful to you. I am going to quit France, probably for two years, to take command in Pondicherry at the request of the king. I wished to avoid it, for I am now an old man, and have other objects before me; but my sovereign has required my services, and I obey. I may return, and I may not; and I am consequently very busy in making every preparation for either event. My first care has been to secure you, my dear boy, as far as it is in my power, against any greater reverse of fortune than you have experienced already. I have ordered the most solemn

and formal act of adoption to be drawn up, which, with the king's consent, given long ago, and now renewed, will convey to you my estates and title, in any event, whether I return alive or not, and whether the inquiry into your birth result as I could wish it or as I fear it may. In the mean time, I have made over to you during my absence the Chateau of St. Medard, with an allowance of forty thousand livres annually, from which you will pay the wages of all our old servants except those that I take with me; and, although I leave you to act as your own master, yet I request you will not discharge any one who has been in my service more than two years. It will be better that our good friend Arnoux should continue to reside with you. Not knowing how Monsieur d'Artonne may be affected by the doubt cast upon your birth, and hoping that individual merit may in his eyes make up for the loss of accidental advantages, I do not ask you to accompany me to Pondicherry, where I fear that the prejudices of rank would not allow you to take that position in the army for which you are fitted. You will easily understand, my dear Francis, that these prejudices have no share in my feelings, and that, with every deference for the institutions of my country, I view as the very best nobility that which you yourself possess—as the noblest blood which can flow through the human heart, that which prompts it to the noblest actions.

Other motives would also render it expedient that you should remain in France, inasmuch as it is necessary you should watch narrowly all the proceedings in regard to the heirship of the house of Laugy; for, whatever may be my own opinion as to the probable results, it behoves you to look closely to the assertion of whatever rights you possess. I should never wish a young man to pass his early years altogether without sorrow. The character is softened by prosperity, and, if naturally of a good and plastic material, we can form it in the best mould; but it needs the fire of some adversity to harden it into shape. The portion of disappointment allotted to you has been more than to most young men; but, if I know your nature rightly, you will not suffer this somewhat over-intense seasoning to warp your heart or mind, but rather to give them a higher and a finer temper, as the finest sword-blade is that which has been strongly tried. I feel it hard to leave you, Francis, at so early a period of life; but, in point of education, more has been done with you at your present age than with many men of seventy, and I know that I can safely trust you to yourself. Errors you may commit. Where is the man, at any time of his existence, who does not do so? But never let one fault lead you to another: always look upon them as weeds which will spring up in the most cultivated garden, but which require to be rooted out as soon as they are discovered, lest they sow their seed and produce others. I will give you but little advice, Francis. In the choice of your companions you may find a difficulty; but remember always to cast that man from your society for ever who does or says a thing in your presence which you would blush to say or do yourself. Recollect, too, that vice is a contagious disease; and the farther you keep from the infected, the less likely are you to catch the sickness. Precepts regarding individual actions are always vain, for circumstances are infinitely modified; but you have received fixed principles, by which you can gauge all objects presented to you, as men measure mountains by a theodolite, whatever may be their shape or size.

Should Monsieur d'Artonne still consent to give you the hand of his daughter, you have my full consent to unite yourself to her whenever her father thinks fit, whether I be in France or not; but, should he determine to withhold her from you, the sooner you quit her society the better. You may see her after years have passed, with calmer feelings than you can now experience; but, in the ardent days of youth, for two persons, who love one another, to remain together when their union is forbidden, is but to add to their grief and endanger their future peace. Not knowing how you are situated, I do not ask you to come to me before I go, because by so doing I might call you from the only

consolation that you can receive under bitter disappointments. I need not tell you, however, how happy I should be to hold you to my heart once more before I quit my native land, perhaps for ever. If we do not meet, farewell, my dear boy! and, while you remember him who has been a father to your youth, which I know will be as long as you live, forget not that he brought you up to honour.

—Yours,

ST. MEDARD.

Francis de Langy read the letter over twice, and then pressed his lips upon it, as a lover might do upon the writing of his mistress. Madame d'Artonne and Julie had watched him as he read; and the former asked, with a faint smile, "Who is it from, Francis?"

"From the best and kindest of men," replied Francis de Langy—"from Monsieur de St. Medard."

"He is, indeed, all that you say," answered Madame d'Artonne. "I have known him long, and known him always the same. Indeed, Francis, it is to him that my hopes chiefly turn to interest the king in D'Artonne's behalf. I can think of none on whom I can rely but him."

"Then no time is to be lost," said Francis de Langy: "he is going to the Indies almost immediately. Read it, read it, Madame d'Artonne!"

"What is to be done?" exclaimed the countess, running her eye over the first part of the letter. "Good heaven! what is to be done? One hope passes away after another. Knowing how highly the king esteems him, I had fixed all my expectations on him."

"I will set out directly," said Francis de Langy. "It is painful to leave you, dear Julie, in such a situation; but your father's safety must be the first consideration. Had not I better go?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Julie; "go, by all means, Francis."

"Yes, go," added the countess. "We will follow you, dear friend, as soon as this intendant will let us; for I too must come to plead my husband's cause. D'Artonne will not return here; and I told him that we should go into the north, where our communication would be less suspected."

"You will come to St. Medard?" said Francis de Langy, taking her hand. "Oh, yes, you will come thither; and let me be as a son to you, at least till that sad business is settled."

"You will be so always, I hope," replied the countess; "and I will go to St. Medard, for it is not far from Senlis, where I hope first to hear of my husband. But lose no time, dear Francis, for this business may need much solicitation; and, as the viscount is going so soon——"

"I will send to Riom for horses directly," exclaimed Francis de Langy. "But I suppose I must let this intendant know of my departure. Stay—I will write;" and, sitting

down to a table, he addressed a few words to that officer, saying that, having received a letter from Paris, which required his immediate presence in the capital, he begged to notify that he was about to set out as soon as horses could be procured, and to request that the intendant would appoint any person he thought fit to accompany him as far as he judged proper, according to the intentions he had expressed the day before.

One of the archers took charge of the note, and agreed to order the horses up immediately; and Francis de Langy proceeded to bid adieu once more to the Abbé Arnoux, while Jean Marais made every preparation for the journey. The lover then hastened back to Julie d'Artonne, and the countess left them alone for a few minutes together, remembering her own feelings in other days, and judging by them of the wishes of her child. Those minutes passed as rapidly as a child's holiday; and, shortly after Madame d'Artonne returned, it was announced that the horses had arrived, with an inferior officer of the *maréchaussée* to accompany the carriage on horseback.

"How quickly this morning has gone by!" said Francis de Langy; "and yet, dear Julie, I can scarcely believe that it is only four days since I arrived from Paris. It seems as if a month had been crowded into that short space. And now, adieu, my beloved! She is mine, Madame d'Artonne! Her father's consent has been given: have I not yours also?"

"Without hesitation," replied Madame d'Artonne; "I never had any. Julie, you are his; is it not so?"

"For ever! for ever!" answered Julie. "We are plighted by vows that never can be broken;" and with one more embrace Francis left her and hurried off to the carriage.

For the two first stages he saw nothing: the eyes of the mind, like those of the sages of Laputa, were turned inwards. At the conclusion of the second, however, when they paused to change horses, the guard who had accompanied him rode up to the side of the carriage to take leave, having come to the end of his district. Francis de Langy wished him good-bye in an indifferent tone; but the man lingered, and at length asked boldly for a little remembrance for his trouble.

"I think I should refer you," replied Francis de Langy, "to those who gave you the trouble; but, as I suppose these demands are usual, there is a louis for you."

The man assured him that the proceeding was quite customary; but it was not long before he found that the tax was not to stop there.

The posts in that part of the country were long; and night was now beginning to fall heavy and dark, with thick leaden clouds rolling up, and catching upon their hard edges the red

rays of the setting sun. In order to lighten the carriage and to proceed more quickly, Jean Marais had been mounted on a post-horse to follow the vehicle, as was then very common in France; but, as Francis de Langy marked the angry look of the sky, he told his valet that it would be better for him to change his mode of travelling and come in beside him. Jean Marais was very well contented with the proposal; for, although he had found himself amusement in conversing with his worthy friend of the *maréchaussée* during the first two stages, he had contemplated with anything but pleasure a long dull ride through the greater part of the night, with nobody to talk to but himself.

This being settled, the carriage rolled on; but, ere an hour had passed, the darkness which covered the earth was broken by a vivid flash of lightning, and one of the most tremendous thunder-storms he had ever seen accompanied Francis de Langy on his way. There was something in it, however, not altogether unpleasing to him. With the feelings that were in his heart at that moment, nothing merely beautiful could have attracted his attention; but the fitful glare of the electric flame, the loud roll of the thunder, and one or two balls of fire which blazed across the sky, awoke his mind from its trance, and he gazed on eagerly from the window of the carriage, watching for the next bright flash as for some object of deep interest and admiration. Jean Marais, for his part, sat quiet in a corner of the vehicle, and divining that his master wished for no conversation, fell sound asleep; in which state he continued till they stopped at a small lonely post-house above fifty miles from the Chateau d'Artonne.

"Get the horses to as quickly as possible," cried Francis de Langy; "I must lose no time, Jean."

The valet jumped out; but in about five minutes he returned, saying, "There are no horses to be had, sir. There are only three pair kept here; and Count Boot has taken one pair, and the Prince of Shoe the other two."

"*Allez farceur!*" exclaimed the postmaster—who was also an *aubergiste*—coming to the side of the carriage—"go along, you fool! The horses are all out, sir, and won't be back till morning; we have excellent beds, and can give you a good supper. There is a *remise*, too, for the carriage."

"You had better get out, sir," said Jean Marais, in a tone that struck Francis de Langy as somewhat marked; "the place seems very comfortable."

Without more words, then, he descended from the carriage, Jean Marais whispering, as he gave him his arm, "Be upon your guard!" Nothing further could be said, for the host was close to them.

The rain was falling in torrents; and, entering the first

room of the inn, which was the kitchen, the young gentleman perceived a stout, bustling landlady busy at a wide open fireplace, from which proceeded a cheerful blaze, with a girl, apparently her daughter, and a maid helping her in the duties of her office. In one corner of the room, reading a paper by the aid of a tallow-candle, sat an archer of the *maré-chaussée*; while at another small table near the window, finishing a half-bottle of wine and a basin of soup, was a tall, stout, middle-aged man in the garb of a peasant.

A strange feeling of recognition came over Francis de Langy as his eyes fell upon him, though the man's face was turned away from him. Advancing, however, towards the fire, he spoke a few words in a gay tone to the landlady and to the host, who had followed him, and then turned round to take a more deliberate survey of the company. The eyes of the archer were fixed upon him over the edge of the paper which he was reading; and luckily it happened that Francis de Langy perceived such to be the case, for it was with the greatest difficulty that he restrained his surprise and emotion, when, in the peasant seated at the other table, he recognised the Count d'Artonne.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE eyes of Francis de Langy, we have said, rested on the face of the Count d'Artonne; but luckily he had seen that he was himself watched, and he suffered not the slightest expression either of surprise or recognition to pass over his countenance. Turning round again immediately to the woman of the house, he proceeded to make various inquiries regarding his supper, and then asked the landlord what wine he could have, to all of which demands—as is usual in such cases, whether the larder and the cellar be well stored or not—he received the most satisfactory answers; for, to believe the landlady, there was nothing edible which had ever been created that she could not set before him; and from the reply of the host it was evident that the house contained every wine that had ever been made, from that which intoxicated Noah down to the thin *piquette* of the peasant.

While this conversation was going on, Francis de Langy did not fail to observe that the archer folded up his paper, and with an unconcerned air walked out of the room. The door being open, a good many tongues were heard talking without; and the host and the maid bustled about, laying a table for their new and distinguished guest. A moment or

two after, the archer returned, and walking straight up to Francis de Langy, informed him that he wanted to speak with him. The young gentleman accordingly accompanied him into a corner of the room, where the man with a wise shake of the head inquired if he knew the Count d'Artonne. Francis's heart beat quickly, but he contrived to reply in a calm tone, that he had the honour of the count's acquaintance; upon which the man gazed in his face steadily for a minute, and then inquired, "Are you sure that you are not the count yourself?"

Francis burst into a fit of laughter, too natural not to carry conviction with it, and then answered, "Quite sure! Why do you ask?"

"Because I have here his description," replied the archer, "and am directed to arrest him wherever I find him."

"Then let me inquire," said Francis de Langy, "whether in any one particular I am in the least like him according to your account; for if so, the painter must have been a very bad one."

"Pooh, nonsense!" cried the postmaster-landlord. "The count's a man upwards of forty. I know him quite well; and monsieur does not seem twenty yet."

"Ay," rejoined the archer, who had evidently drunk a good deal of wine, staring at the paper in his hand, "and the count is *blond*; and, let me see, monsieur is *noir*."

"No, not quite that either," replied Francis de Langy: "nevertheless, not the Count d'Artonne, or anything the least like him. Where we last changed horses, I saw a man a good deal resembling him; and if you had beheld him, you would soon have remarked a difference between him and me."

"Ha!" cried the archer; "where, do you say?"

"Nay, nay," replied Francis de Langy; "you need not prick up your ears, my good friend, nor look as if you were going to run after him directly: in the first place, he is six leagues off; and in the next, I am very sure it was not the count."

There was a tone of doubt in what he said, however, which made the archer believe that it might be the count, after all; and that suspicion puzzled him not a little, for he had other purposes in hand at the moment, which he did not like to abandon. "Well, I am glad to hear it," he replied; "for I intend, young master, to accompany you on your next stage. I hear from the postilion that you came to the last relay under *surveillance*, and I think it is my duty to go on with you."

"You know your own duty best," answered Francis de Langy; "but, as I did not come here under *surveillance*, probably you may find at the next stage you have gone some-

what out of your way. If you expect to get a louis," he continued, beginning to see the man's drift, "as the archer who accompanied me from Riom did, you are very much mistaken. He came with me nearly ten leagues for my convenience, but I do not want any one now; so, if you go, it is for your own, and therefore you may pay yourself."

The archer bit his lip, and frowned at him with the uncertain but dogged air of a bully who is not quite sure how to act; and after a moment's pause he ended by saying, "Well, show me your papers—I will see every man's papers."

"Oh! with all my heart," answered Francis de Langy; and, taking out his pocket-book, he placed it quietly in the archer's hand, who looked over the contents, while the young gentleman cast an anxious glance towards the Count d'Artonne, who continued sitting at the table without the slightest emotion.

"Ah, very well," replied the archer, giving back the pocket-book when he had done; "that seems all right. But now for the rest."

"There is my servant without," said Francis de Langy, anxious to divert his attention from the count; but the postmaster interfered at the same moment, exclaiming, "Oh, ay! I had better call monsieur's servant. As for him," he continued, pointing to the count, "you know who he is already."

"What was the name you told me?" asked the other, with a pencil in his hand.

"Jerome Marzay," answered the postmaster. "Why, you must know him yourself."

The count rose from his seat, and nodded familiarly to the archer, who replied, "I think I have seen him before."

"That you have, monsieur, more than once," said the count; and the archer, turning round to Jean Marais, who entered at the moment, began to question him as to his name and profession.

"My name is Jean Marais," replied our friend; "and, as to profession, I am a rogue, which, I take it, is another name for a gentleman's valet-de-chambre. This is the noble gentleman who patronises me, Monsieur François de Langy, who, if it did not unfortunately happen that the horses are all out, might now be rolling away towards Paris as comfortably as possible; for the thunder is gone by, and the stars are beginning to blink out, like a schoolboy's eyes recovering from a flogging."

"Well, then," said the archer, "I shall get upon my horse's back, and return to St. Pourçain. I have got a strange notion that was the Count d'Artonne you saw, and that you know it too."

"No, no," replied Francis de Langy; "I only said it was like him, but I don't think it actually was. You had better stay and take a glass of this wine. It was not he, I am quite sure."

The young gentleman had seen from the first that the archer was determined to read his information the contrary way; and, as he wished him heartily to go back, he naturally tried to persuade him to stay; a little fearful, it is true, that he might overshoot the mark and induce him to remain, yet hoping, from the state in which he already was, that a few more glasses of wine would inebriate him completely, even if he were prevailed upon to continue where he was. The archer, however, held his resolution, took one brimming glassful of the host's good wine, and then, muttering something about a *lonis-d'or*, brought his horse out of the stable and rode away to St. Pourçain; where he roused the people from their sleep, and began an immediate inquiry for the Count d'Artonne, alleging he had positive information that the escaped prisoner was then in or very near the place.

In the mean while Francis de Langy gazed for a moment at the Count d'Artonne without speaking. It seemed evident that the postmaster was in his secret, and yet not the slightest sign of recognition could be observed between them after the archer was gone.

"Come, Master Jerome Marzay," said Francis at length, judging it best to keep up the appearance of not knowing who he was as long as possible; "since this good archer would not give me his company, will you? Sit down, and let us sup together."

"I have supped already, sir," replied the pretended peasant with a boorish air, "but I'll take some of your wine, if you are good enough. It is better than mine, I dare say;" and drawing his stool to the table, over which a cloth was by this time spread for the young gentleman's supper, he poured himself out a glass of Burgundy, adding, "Ah! we poor farmers can't afford to drink such wine as this."

Francis de Langy took his place at the other side, and, while the good hostess put some of her savoury ragouts upon the table, both remained silent; but, a minute or two after, the landlord sent all the female members of his household to prepare the young gentleman's bed, and then quitted the room himself, closing the door behind him. The moment he was gone, the count stretched out his hand across the table, and grasped that of his young friend.

"Well met, well met, my dear Francis!" he cried; "how are they all?—how is my wife?—how is our dear Julie?"

Francis de Langy replied briefly, telling him generally what had occurred, but not dwelling upon the violent con-

duct of the intendant, lest he should inflict unnecessary pain upon the count. "Is it not dangerous," he asked in the end, "to travel upon the high-road? You have had a narrow escape to-night."

"I have had twenty as near since I left you," said Monsieur d'Artonne, "and the danger was not so great as you suppose. The postmaster is an old and faithful friend, for whom I obtained his present situation, and he was sure to provide for my safety, though the archer's being driven in here by the thunder-storm was certainly an unpleasant event. This is the first time I have ventured upon the high-road; but I was forced to do so, by finding that a whole party of the *maréchaussée* had followed me, whether accidentally or advisedly I know not, through the hills. But now tell me, Francis, why have you left them so soon? Do they not require your protection and support?"

"I am hastening with all speed towards Paris," replied Francis de Langy, "for an object which, if I succeed, will give them more comfort and happiness than my presence in the Chateau d'Artonne, if I were to stay there for ever. Monsieur de St. Medard is ordered to Pondicherry immediately. He has yielded most unwillingly to the king's request; and I know that, even previously, he was high in his majesty's confidence and favour. He may surely ask one boon before he goes; and, if I judge rightly, that boon will be a pardon for you, and the king's order to suspend all proceedings against you."

"That is indeed an object," said the count emphatically; "that is indeed an object. But, ere we part, we must arrange some plan of communication. Where do you go to first, Francis?"

"To the Hôtel de Langy," replied his young friend at once; but then paused, and added with a saddened and a doubtful air, "I suppose its doors will not be closed against me yet, and that my mother and my father will not be so completely the tools of an impostor as to refuse a home to their own son."

As he spoke, the tears rose in his eyes, and he covered them with his hand; for, during the last two days, his interest in the events which had taken place at the Chateau d'Artonne had banished the remembrance of his own painful situation; and all that was sad and terrible therein now rushed upon him with increased force, as a torrent, which is for a time stopped by rocks that have been cast down in its course, rushes on but the more furiously when it has overleaped the barrier.

"Yes," he continued, after a brief pause, "I will first go to the Hôtel de Langy, and there at all events I shall be

heard of. Soon after my uncle is gone, however, I shall proceed to St. Medard; and there Madame d'Artonne and Julie have promised to join me, as it is not far from Senlis, where the countess thought she might hear of you."

"I told her so; I told her so," replied the count, who had been meditating deeply. "And now, Francis, to our arrangements; for, as I intend to travel by night and sleep by day, I must soon be on my horse's back. I propose to take the name of Latrobe; therefore, if you receive a letter with that signature, understand that it is from me. If, however, by any chance, a blank sheet of paper folded as a letter, should be sent to you, recollect it is to give you notice that I am in your neighbourhood, but under such dangerous circumstances that I dare not even write under my assumed name. In such a case," he continued, "go as much out as possible, but alone; and, at any time that you may hear three short, sharp whistles, you may conclude that I am near, and endeavouring to draw your steps or your attention in a particular direction. I think that this is all that we can settle for the present."

"The countess will be rejoiced to know of your safety," said Francis de Langy, seeing that the count was preparing to depart; "but how can I communicate it to her? All letters addressed to the chateau, I see, are opened at Riom."

The count mused. "I know not," he replied; "I know not how to contrive that; but ——"

At that moment the maid returned into the kitchen where they sat; her master and mistress followed the moment after; and the count, resuming his peasant air and jargon, rose up, thanking Francis de Langy for his treat, as he called it, and then turned to the landlord, saying, "I must be jogging, Master Lanjois, so I will just go and get my beast. What have I to pay?"

"Fourteen sous, Jerome," replied the landlord; and, counting out the money, Monsieur d'Artonne once more bade Francis good night and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was early in the morning when the carriage of Francis stopped before the *porte-cochère* of the Hôtel de Langy, and some minutes elapsed before the heavy knocker brought the porter to the gate.

The old man bowed low and reverently to his young master; there was no change in his aspect nor in that of any of the other servants, who soon came out to the side of the carriage. They had all known and loved him from infancy, and he was still lord in their hearts, whatever his tale might be. His first question was, "Are my father and mother well? His second was for Monsieur de St. Medard, when, to his consternation and surprise, he found that his uncle had quitted Paris to take ship on the preceding day.

Now, indeed, he felt lonely, left to struggle with the world under the most difficult and adverse circumstances; and bitterly also was he disappointed in regard to his hopes of Monsieur d'Artonne's pardon. Retiring, however, to his apartments, he threw off his travelling garb, and waited with very mingled but with many painful emotions for the hour of the marquis's rising. He had plenty of time to meditate, but he arranged no plan of what he was to say or what he was to do. A certain degree of pride made him judge that it would be unworthy of him to consider for a moment what should be his demeanour towards those whom he had ever looked upon as his parents; and he turned his thoughts immediately towards Madame d'Artonne and Julie, asking himself how he might best soothe them while he communicated to them the destruction of their chief hope. Rapid in the execution of all his resolutions, he sat down shortly after his arrival, and wrote to Madame d'Artonne, assuring her that, though Monsieur de St. Medard was gone, nothing should be wanting on his part to attain the object which they had in view; but he felt that the expectation he held out must be very faint in comparison with those which he was forced to destroy, and his letter was longer and more laboured than he wished to make it.

It was just concluded when one of the servants came to tell him that the marquis had left his room; and, sealing his letter, he instantly proceeded to the saloon in which the family usually sat in the morning. All parties were considerably agitated, and Madame de Langy changed colour more than once as the youth whom she had regarded with

maternal tenderness advanced towards her. There was such an air of affectionate respect in his whole carriage—an appearance of pleasure at seeing her again, mingled with sadness that a doubt of his being her child should ever have found place in her mind—that feelings of self-reproach rose up in the marchioness's heart, and, throwing her arms around him, she exclaimed, "Oh, Francis, Francis! however this unfortunate affair may end, I shall always regard myself as your mother."

"And I as your father," added the count "My fortune and my name may be given by the law to another; but my warmest affection is yours, and that no law can take from you."

"Thank you, my dear father! thank you, my dear mother!" replied Francis de Langy; "I shall not only feel towards you as a son, but I shall ever retain the unalterable conviction that I am your son. Nothing can remove that belief from my heart; and, whether imposture may or may not succeed, to the end of my days I shall think, as now, that your blood runs in my veins, and not the blood of a villain who could ever consent to such a fraud upon you as he now pretends he has committed."

"We must not prejudge the question; it will soon be tried," replied the marquis gravely: "but one of the strongest corroborations of this man's story to my mind is, that for the sake, apparently of revealing the truth and doing full though tardy justice, he exposes himself to punishment either way—for the fraud he committed many years ago, if the cause goes in favour of the boy he pretends is our son; or for the fraud he now commits, if the cause goes against him. His danger is great in both cases."

"May he be punished as he deserves!" replied Francis de Langy. "But now let me ask, my dear father, where is this youth who would fain deprive your son of his place and name? You have seen him, I find. Where is he? and what is he now about?"

The marquis felt a little hesitation, and not a little discomfort, in answering the question; but, of course, that which had been done could not be concealed, and he replied, "We did not think fit to receive him into the house; but he has a lodging in the neighbouring street, where he is with a tutor finishing his education."

"Receive him into the house!" repeated Francis de Langy, looking down; "receive him into the house!"

He could not help feeling bitterly that his cause had been abandoned somewhat easily; but he would not suffer one reproachful word to escape his lips, and the only indication he gave of what was passing in his heart was the repetition of

the marquis's words. As the conversation proceeded, he had reason to believe that this course of things had gone on still farther. He found that the youth who claimed his rank and name was a daily visiter at the Hôtel de Langy; that the marquis and marchioness thought him like their late son; and that his foster-father had already insured forgiveness for the offence which he avowed, and was viewed with favour and consideration by those whom he admitted he had deceived. Every word, in short, that was spoken was a drop of bitterness in the cup of Francis de Langy; and even the expression of tenderness and affection with which the marquis and marchioness attempted to soothe him produced more painful than pleasurable emotions..

When breakfast was over, and the party were crossing the hall, an event took place against which the marquis had wished a guard. The farmer Latouches entered at the very moment, and approached with a look of familiar ease, as one well accustomed to the house. The colour came up in the marchioness's cheek, and she walked on without taking any notice of him; but the marquis paused with stronger resolution, saying, "This young gentleman, Latouches, is one for whose sake you have injured us in times past, or whom you are now labouring to injure as deeply."

Francis de Langy gazed at him from head to foot; and, though so many years had passed since he had been in the *Ferme Godard*, a strange feeling of vague recognition crossed his mind. In the mean while Gerard Latouches exclaimed, "Is this my son?" and approached a step nearer to Francis de Langy.

"No, sir," replied Francis, "I am not your son. I never will own myself to be so; let the result of your iniquity be what it may."

"Oh, but you must, young gentleman!" cried Latouches, nettled at the look of scorn he gave him. "You must own yourself as my son, and me as your father; ay, and do your duty under such circumstances."

"No," replied Francis de Langy; "I know enough of the law to be well aware that, whatever comes of this, the rights you have once cast off you cannot resume at pleasure; and that, by once denying me to be your son, and asserting that I was the child of another person, whether truly or falsely, you have severed all ties between us for ever. I will not stand longer to talk with this man, sir," he continued, turning to the marquis; "I fear I may forget myself."

"No more, Latouches; no more!" said the marquis, as Francis de Langy turned away. "What he says is right: under no circumstances can you have any authority over him; neither, indeed, can you expect him to show the duty

and affection of a son. You must, in some degree, bear the consequences of your own acts."

Latouches replied briefly and with perfect submission, and then proceeded to the business which had brought him thither, hinting that, as the farm adjoining his own fell vacant at the next term, he should be glad to add it to the *Perme Godard*, and craving one or two other favours of the Marquis de Langy. That nobleman referred him to his intendant, who, being his near relative, was not likely to refuse him; especially as Monsieur de Langy added good-humouredly, "I do not object, if there be no other claims."

In the mean time Francis de Langy retired to his own chamber, and, sitting down, covered his eyes with his hands, giving himself up to bitter meditations. Could he stay there, he asked himself, "in a house where he was every day liable to see those who were, *unjustly*, he thought, endeavouring to deprive him of his inheritance, where his own parents were evidently yielding themselves more and more to the claims of another—where his rights had been given up almost without resistance? No: he resolved he would quit the Hôtel de Langy as speedily as possible. He would return to Auvergne, he thought, and seek for consolation where all the strongest affections of his heart were placed. In the first instance, however, it was necessary to put his own affairs in train for defending his rights against the adverse party; and he determined to employ the lawyers of Monsieur de St. Medard, whom he already knew and respected, rather than those of Monsieur de Langy, with whom he was not acquainted, and whom he suspected of having given weak and irresolute counsels to his father. He was preparing to set out to consult with his uncle's notary, when a formal citation was brought him, to appear in a court which it indicated, and—to use some of the terms of English law—to show cause why he should not be declared the son of *Geord Latouches*. The very wording of the document made his blood boil: it termed him Francis Latouches, pretended Count de Langy; and it accused him, with that sort of fiction which the law, though intended to be the instrument for discovering truth, delights to indulge in—of conspiring with others to defraud and exclude from his just rights Francis de Langy, the real and veritable son of the marquis and marchioness. Carrying the paper in his hand, he proceeded at once to the house of the notary, in a state of great agitation and anger. The old man received him with kindness approaching parental tenderness, and read the paper, with a smile at the wrath it had excited.

"This is but a form," he said, "yet the manner in which these people are proceeding is very artful. They are endea-

vouring, as far as possible, to throw the great burden of proof off their own shoulders; but the French law will not permit that. You have been for many years in possession, and they must make out a strong case to shake you therein. Your excellent friend, Monsieur de St. Medard, has already had various consultations with several of our most celebrated jurisconsults. I will send to the same gentlemen immediately, and perhaps we may all have another conference to-morrow or the day after."

"But," replied Francis de Langy, "I am extremely anxious to return to Auvergne the day after to-morrow at the latest."

"That is impossible, my dear sir," cried the notary: "after this citation, we may fairly consider the proceedings as begun; and, so long as the courts are sitting, you must not think of being more than a day's journey from Paris."

"Then I will go to St. Medard," said Francis de Langy, "at once. I cannot stay in my father's house."

"That, perhaps, will be the best plan," replied the notary: "there you are not above six or seven hours' journey from Paris, and will be within call whenever you are wanted; but, at all events, you must remain here for a day or two, for we have many things to settle. The king hurried Monsieur de St. Medard's departure so much that there is a good deal of business unconcluded. However, he has given me instructions to pay over to you forty thousand livres annually—one half-year being left with me in advance—to put you in possession of the Chateau de St. Medard, and to discharge from his funds all the proceedings in this suit. I am afraid the costs will be very heavy; but his order is unlimited, and we will make the best defence we can."

The good notary's words cast Francis de Langy into a fit of deep and sad thought, though they may not seem to the reader to have been calculated to produce such an effect; but it was that they suggested to his mind a comparison between the conduct of his parents and that of the more distant relation who had taken such generous care of all his interests; so that the joyful emotions of gratitude were mingled with disappointment and regret. He agreed, however, to the proposal of the notary; and, on his return to the Hôtel de Langy, briefly informed the marquis and marchioness that it was his intention to go for some months to St. Medard, if they had no objection, as soon as the preliminary proceedings for defending his rights had been arranged with the lawyers of the viscount.

To his leaving Paris the marquis made no objection; not only inasmuch as, Francis having been all through life accustomed to act without his control, he was not habituated to

direct his proceedings, but also because he felt, though he did not acknowledge it to himself, that his son's presence was in some degree both a reproach and an embarrassment to him. He was not inclined to admit, indeed, that he had acted hastily, rashly, or unkindly in any part of his conduct towards the new claimant; but yet he knew that Francis must think he had done so, and consequently, for the time at least, his society was likely to produce a sensation of restraint.

He commented, however, in a tone of some reproach, upon the fact of his son having employed any other lawyers than his own to defend his cause.

"You must remember, Francis," he said, "that I acknowledge you as my child till it is absolutely and distinctly proved that you are not so; and even then shall always feel towards you and act towards you as a father."

Francis de Langy heard him to an end in silence, but then replied with a grave and respectful air, "I am quite sure, my dear father, that you will do all that is kind and considerate by me; but at the same time you will perceive that there are many motives which would induce me to take the course I have done. In the first place, from all you have said this morning, and from all that had previously occurred between you and this impostor, I was inclined to think that you had resolved in some degree to remain neuter in the matter. Indeed, you are in a very painful and difficult situation; for, of course, where there is even a plausible pretext for the young man's claim, you would not like vehemently to oppose one who may hereafter be legally declared to be your son. I therefore thought it better for my rights to be defended by any other lawyers than your own. I must also tell you, that I found on inquiry Monsieur de St. Medard had already placed my cause in the hands of several very distinguished men."

"Oh, that makes the case very different," replied the marquis. "Of course you could not take it from them."

But, though these words ended the conversation upon that point, Monsieur de Langy could not help feeling that his son had lost confidence in his attachment. To change an embarrassing subject, Francis immediately diverted the conversation to the Count d'Artonne and the situation in which he was placed, referring to the hopes which he had entertained of his uncle's influence with the king being sufficient to obtain the count's pardon. News at that period travelled far less rapidly than at present, and it required many days before any events occurring in the provinces, except such as affected the public weal, became the subject of conversation in the capital. Monsieur de Langy was

surprised and grieved by the tidings which he now received; but he entered warmly into the cause of the Count d'Artonne, declaring he felt perfectly certain that if the count had killed the young Marquis de Bausse, it must have been in some accidental encounter provoked by the latter, whom he pronounced a wild, vicious, unprincipled young man, whose conduct in Paris must have given pain to all connected with him.

"I will myself go to Versailles," he said, "as soon as the king returns from Fontainebleau, and will use my utmost endeavours to obtain a promise of pardon."

Satisfied with this assurance, Francis de Langy spent the next three days in Paris, in consultation with lawyers and the arrangement of various other matters which Monsieur de St. Medard had left for him to conclude. During the first two mornings he felt some apprehension lest he should be brought in contact with the new claimant of the heirship of De Langy; but the marquis had taken care to prevent the occurrence of such an event, by notifying to the young man that it would be better for him to abstain from visiting at the Hôtel de Langy during the next week. Francis, however, learned accidentally that both his father and mother saw the youth every day; which fact was more painful to him than it might have been if he had known all that passed in their minds upon those occasions. There was a comparison constantly going on between him and his foster-brother, which, it must be confessed, was altogether to his advantage. His demeanour was not so supple and insinuating, but it was far more dignified and manly; and though the manners of the new claimant were graceful and his person handsome, yet when Monsieur de Langy returned and gazed upon Francis, there could be no doubt as to which he would prefer to call his son.

At the end of the third day Francis took leave of the marquis and marchioness, proposing to set out early on the following morning, but adding that in all probability he should be in Paris in less than a week, as the suit in which he was engaged would undoubtedly bring him frequently to the capital. His object in making this announcement was to diminish the pain and formality of the parting; but, nevertheless, when Madame de Langy retired to her own chamber, she felt as if she had lost a child, and wept bitterly; and on the next day, when she rose and found him gone, the aspect of the house seemed desolate and cheerless.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

How vacant is the home we love, when those we love are gone! How cold, how dreary, how desolate, the sunniest spot from which the heart's sunshine is departed! Francis de Langy stood in the Chateau of St. Medard gazing round him, and scarcely believing it the same place in which the joyous footsteps of youth trod not many months before. How lightly had he then walked from room to room! How had his heart carolled there, when, rising in the early morning, he gazed from the narrow window through the thick wall, either at the bright aspect of the woody country around in the warm glow of summer, or at the wild sea of dry branches, perhaps silvered o'er with frost, in the clear cold sparkle of the wintry day! Six months—scarcely six months—were past, yet all was altered; but the alteration was in his own heart, and so it is with us ever through life. It is not alone, as the old Roman said, that the times change and we change with them, but that we change faster than they do; and like the glasses of various hues with which we are sometimes furnished to gaze at some splendid picture or some celebrated view, the colour of the feelings within us at the time gives their tone to our vision at each different period of life, and we see things from the beginning of our days to the end, not as they are, but through the medium of our own sensations—sometimes magnified, sometimes diminished—sometimes bright with a fictitious sunshine, sometimes dark through the shady glasses of disappointment and despair. Thus, too, we may hope it will be hereafter, when, having shaken off the dim veil of our mortal nature from before our eyes, the spirit shall see the works of God in the clear lustre of their own existence.

Everything here is as we estimate it, and the changes in our hearts make the changes that we feel. In the last six months how much had happened to Francis de Langy to give a different aspect to all that he beheld? He had gone forth a boy, he had come back a man—not perhaps in years, but in sensations. He had thought, he had acted for himself; he had loved, he had feared, he had suffered bitter disappointments; he had undergone the touch of care, sorrow, anxiety, apprehension. He had become experienced in man's feelings, and he returned a man; so that the place of his boyhood might well look altered from the altered eyes with which he viewed it. The chaplet on the brow of man-

hood is a heavy one, and happy is he who can wear it without his temples aching beneath the burden. Hardly anything in the Chateau of St. Medard was changed since he had left it: all the old servants were there, everything was in its peculiar place; the house-dog bayed under his window as before, and the horse-boy was whistling the same air in the stable-yard which he had whistled on the very morning of his departure. Every note came familiarly to the ear of Francis de Langy, and formed connecting links between the past and the present; but when he looked round, and saw in the hall the vacant places of Monsieur de St. Medard and of his good old friend the Abbé Arnoux, he found that there was a great gap which the heart yearned to fill up again. Thus, his first sensations in the Chateau of St. Medard were melancholy enough; but he had been barely three minutes in the house before there happened one of those little incidents which partially scatter the clouds of life by the warm rays of human affection, and made him feel at home again. He stood in the hall with the old porter who had let him in—none of the other servants, who had all been taken by surprise, having yet come to welcome him—when suddenly he heard some steps running overhead, like the quick pattering of a child's feet; and in a minute after his good nurse, whom we described long ago, darted into the hall, her face beaming with smiles.

"I was sure it was you, Francis," she said, running up to him with extended arms, and seeing nothing in the handsome young man before her but the boy whose early years she had tended; "I was sure it was you when I beheld the carriage drive up."

Francis de Langy had to bow down his head to receive the salute which good Louise Pelet bestowed upon both sides of his face; and then, drawing back, the little woman looked at him from head to foot, with her bright blue eyes twinkling with satisfaction, and her tongue going with vast volubility. From all the questions she had to ask, and all the little pieces of news she had to give, one would have thought that Louise Pelet would have remained there half the day; but Louise was never known to stay a whole quarter of an hour in any place except in her bed; and ere ten minutes were over she exclaimed, "But I must go and see that your room is well aired, and tell the cook to get you a nice dinner, and have a fire lighted in the evening in the little saloon; these autumnal nights are getting cold."

So away she went, running hither and thither with all her usual activity, and was soon busied in all those household cares which it was her joy and glory to perform with the most scrupulous accuracy and promptitude. It was not ex-

actively bustle, for she seldom raised her voice high, or went out of her way, or did a thing hastily, though in everything she was quick, eager, and precise. To make her young lord comfortable in her own fashion now became her greatest pride; and, during his after stay in the chateau, Louise was always in continual motion, very rarely coming near him, indeed, but quite satisfied with the certainty that by her own incessant activity everything was going on right and smoothly. Once or twice in every day, it is true, she would look into whatever room he happened to be sitting in, as it were merely to show her face and to see his, and to judge thereby whether he had all that he wanted. He might be at dinner, he might be taking his coffee, reading, writing, or sitting with one of the very few neighbours; it was all the same to Louise: in she came, took her look, and away she went again; or, if she had anything to say, some news to tell, or some question to ask, she would advance, with her peculiar quick step, take hold of the back of his chair, lean over his shoulder, and speak her two or three brief sentences, scarcely waiting for a reply before she disappeared. Louise never pretended to have a good temper; and, knowing her own infirmities, she kept herself as much as possible at a distance from the other servants of the house, never by any chance saying a bad word of any of them, and always having something in extenuation to suggest if they were blamed, but scolding them heartily for anything they did wrong if she came across them herself. At first, on her young master's arrival, she did not seem at all disposed to treat Jean Marais very hospitably; and once or twice her voice was heard elevated to a very shrill tone in her brief conversations with that worthy personage. When Francis mentioned his name to her, however, and told her how much the valet had served him on various occasions, she replied good-humouredly, "Oh, yes, he is a *bon garçon*, I am sure; but I will keep out of his way, for he is too free for me."

Jean Marais himself, in the mean time, conformed with wonderful facility to the quiet customs of the Chateau of St. Medard: having an opportunity of varying a life which might otherwise be somewhat monotonous, by expeditions to the small town of Senlis, which was some five or six miles distant, he did not appear to find it dull. Before he had quitted Paris, he had made himself fully aware of the whole story regarding the new claim to the heirship of De Langy, which the servants of the marquis discussed freely with him, not in the least suspecting his connection with Gerard Latouches. It might seem natural, the reader may suppose, for Jean Marais, on learning that his young master was probably his own cousin, to lose in a degree his respect for

him; and one would be still more inclined to imagine that might be the case, when it is admitted that Jean Marais had entertained shrewd suspicions that a change of the two children brought up at the Ferme Godard had taken place, ever since his last visit to Gerard Latouches. But, strange to say, if there was any alteration in his conduct at all, it was only more respectful towards the young Count de Langy, as he was still called; for Jean had his peculiar notions on most subjects, and he had a great reverence for a well-educated and noble-minded man in unmerited distress. Stranger still, however, it may seem, that his suspicions in regard to Francis's birth were shaken rather than confirmed by the fact of Gerard Latouches having acknowledged the fraud.

"If it be true," he said to himself, "he must have been very sure it would soon be found out, otherwise he would never have owned it."

Nevertheless, doubts still rankled in his mind; and he determined, on the very first occasion, to ride over to the Ferme Godard, though the distance was considerable, and see if he could discover anything to confirm or remove his suspicions.

Early after his arrival at the chateau, Francis de Langy wrote a second letter to the Countess d'Artonne, mentioning the intention he had at one time entertained of returning to Auvergne, and the causes which had obliged him to abandon it. He reminded her of her promise to come to St. Medard, and urged her to fulfil it as soon as possible, assuring her that the Marquis de Langy would make interest with the king for her husband's pardon, and pointing out that her solicitations might greatly facilitate his suit. He dared not refer to his interview with Monsieur d'Artonne, lest his letter should be opened—which, indeed, was the case—but he said in the end, that, as it was so long since the count had been heard of, he doubted not he had effected his escape into Switzerland.

Three weeks elapsed ere he received an answer, but then it only conveyed disappointment. Madame d'Artonne informed him that she could not obtain the intendant's permission to quit the chateau, which was still partially occupied by the police. She was treated with every sort of kindness and consideration, indeed, she added, and the intendant was perfectly courteous and polite; but to all her entreaties to be permitted to go to Paris he returned evasive answers, and she saw that it was clearly his intention to keep her in Auvergne.

The quick heart of the youth beat vehemently when he received these tidings, and he determined to make arrangements for going to the Chateau d'Artonne himself, even if it should be but for a day; but his lawyers strongly opposed his so doing till some of the formal steps in the suit at issue,

which they described to him, had been taken by the other party. At the same time, we must remark that the new claimant did not seem to press forward the proceedings with the haste which might have been expected; and in more than one letter the old notary of Monsieur de St. Medard observed, "Your adversary is going on with the utmost caution; he is resolved to lose nothing for want of prudence at least."

Thus all matters were delayed for a fortnight longer, which brought about the middle of November, and signs of an early and severe winter were showing themselves. The weather, however, was clear and bright; and, having determined to wait no longer, but set out for Auvergne in the beginning of the following week, Francis de Langy wandered forth on the Saturday evening, in that meditative mood which has been described by all poets as peculiar to the young lover. His mind certainly was more busy with Julie d'Artonne than with anything else. He thought of her in her young beauty; he thought of her as he had seen her under the influence of many emotions; he thought of that varying face in all its lovely changes of expression; and he longed, with the thirst which none but the young and ardent can feel, to drink deep draughts of affection from the well of those pure lustrous eyes. They were sweet dreams that he indulged in; but, as is ever the case, apprehension, the snake which generally lies beneath the flower of human enjoyment, showed its dull head while he thus meditated on her he loved. He wondered that he had not heard from Madame d'Artonne; it seemed very strange; he fancied something unpleasant must have happened to prevent her replying to his last letter. Could Julie be ill? he asked himself. Had her health failed under the pressure of such constant anxieties and griefs as she had lately been called upon to bear? His heart felt cold at the vision which imagination had presented, and he had well-nigh turned his steps homeward in order to set out that very night. But then again he reflected that his letter had been gone just a fortnight, that he had therein hinted to the countess his intention to return for a time to Auvergne, and it was more than probable, he concluded, that, in the expectation of seeing him soon, she had not written, lest her letter should miss him by the way.

As he thus meditated, he ascended one of the highest hills in the neighbourhood, which the reader must recollect if he have visited that part of France. It is not steep, at least on the side next to Senlis, but rises gradually through some woods and moorish sort of lands till it overtops everything around. Thence the eye stretches over a fair and undulating country for many miles on every side, seeing the spires of towns and cities beneath one; catching at once Senlis and

Beaumont, and then running on past Chantilly, till Beauvais itself is distinctly visible, with its cathedral rising large and dark above the rest, while beyond the country softens off, and all becomes dim and lost like the objects of early memory. Francis de Langy paused and gazed around him. There is always something elevating, something invigorating, in the contemplation of Nature's face; it seems as if from the works of God breathes forth to the heart of man a portion of the high and divine spirit in which they are created; and Francis de Langy felt his courage and his resolution rise to grapple with the ills of life, whatever they might be, as he gazed over that wide prospect, with the flood of evening radiance glowing in the skies above him, and the purple light of the evening sun pouring over the far-extended lands below.

After stretching his sight to the utmost verge of the horizon, he turned his eyes downward again towards the Chateau of St. Medard, which stood upon its little woody knoll beneath him, at the distance of about three miles. He saw the cattle of the neighbouring farm winding homeward from their pasture; he saw a flock of sheep following their shepherd to the village; but another moving object caught his eye: it was a carriage drawn slowly forward by horses that seemed tired. Francis de Langy watched it along the high-road to Senlis with feelings of interest.

"Some people going home to those they love," he thought; "God make their meeting a happy one!" But the next minute the carriage came near the turning which led to St. Medard, stopped there for a moment, and then suddenly quitted the highway and rolled along the road towards the chateau. Oh! how the heart of Francis de Langy beat as he ran down the hill, and sped with a foot of light back to his home!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It was as he thought. In the court-yard of the chateau stood the carriage; old Joseph and Jean Marais were handing down trunk-mails and portmanteaus, and another servant of the Count d'Artonne, with one of the domestics of the chateau, was carrying them in as they were laid upon the stone pavement. No sooner did Joseph behold Francis de Langy than he stopped in his work, bowed low, and was beginning to tell the young gentleman how happy he was to see him again, and all about their journey, and a great many things besides. But Jean Marais, who knew better, stopped him, saying, "Let monsieur pass, Joseph. He will talk to

you by-and-by;" and Francis de Langy, with a nod to the old man, entered the house and ran rapidly to the little saloon. The step—the well-known step—of him she loved called Julie from the window, and, bounding forward to meet him, with the innocence of the child brightening the love of the woman, she sprang to the arms that were open to clasp her, and clung to his bosom as he pressed her to his heart.

"Oh, this is joy indeed!" cried Francis; and Madame d'Artonne, wiping away a tear from her eyes, came forward and held out her hand, saying, "I must be welcomed too, Francis."

"And I also," exclaimed the good Abbé Arnoux; "though Julie has the first right, of course."

Where is the artist who could ever paint a cataract? They may represent the white expanse of falling water, the foam, the rocks, the spray; but where is the motion?—where is the rush of the torrent, the ever-changing glistening of the dashing stream, the life, the busy and tumultuous life, of the quick waves? It has never yet been done; and those who attempt to convey by description moments of eager and tumultuous joy, such as Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne knew at that moment, will likewise fail in conveying aught but a cold, inanimate picture to the mind of the reader. The anxious question, the rapid reply, the look of love, the pause of enjoyment, the pressure of the hand, the sigh of obtrusive memory, the careful scanning of each feature to see if time has inflicted no injury, the thousand nameless shades of expression upon the face, the varying tones, the words understood and answered ere half spoken, and the confused and agitated emotions, gushing as out of a fountain, from the heart of love—these defy description, and leave the pen or the tongue all powerless.

Let us pass over the next hour, then, and having done so, seat ourselves with Julie, and Francis de Langy, and Madame d'Artonne, and the good Abbé Arnoux, round the wide fireplace of the saloon, cheerful with many a blazing log; and, while Louise Pelet bustles about to make preparations for the new guests, Jean Marais and the old butler of the chateau lay the cloth for supper in the *salle-à-manger*, and the cook toils and looks furious in her vocation, let us listen to the tidings from Auvergne, which were of no slight interest to those who heard and those who told, and of no mean importance to this story.

Madame d'Artonne had received the letter of Francis de Langy, announcing his intention to visit them at their own house as soon as possible; and not a little glad were they, she said, at the thought of his coming, as the intendant still continued the same course of conduct, and opposed her

quitting Auvergne. The same day, however, on which her young friend's letter had arrived, a rumour had reached the chateau that a high appointment—no less than a seat in the ministry of France—had been conferred upon the intendant himself. The next day that officer had visited the Chateau d'Artonne with smooth and plausible demeanour, informing the countess that, being elevated far above his deserts and expectations, he might have an opportunity of serving the count which had never occurred before. He promised her that he would use it zealously, and assured her that nothing but the deepest sense of duty had ever caused, or would cause, him to behave with even the appearance of severity towards any member of a family whom he so much esteemed and loved. "Now," he said, "I can act in a different manner; for, not having to deal with the matter individually, so that there can be no breach of duty implied, I can appeal to the king, and urge him most strongly to supersede all proceedings in the case of Monsieur d'Artonne."

"He made me quite believe," said Julie, commenting upon what her mother had stated—"he made me quite believe that he had our interests sincerely at heart, especially as he said in leaving us, that his authority as intendant being at an end, he could no longer oppose our proceeding to Paris, where he himself was going, and where he would not fail, the moment he saw the king, to plead our cause to the best of his ability."

"Little indeed did we expect," continued Madame d'Artonne, taking up the history again, "that the very next day, as we were making our preparations for setting out, we should receive a formal notice of the estates of my husband being entirely sequestrated till such time as he should appear to take his trial, he having been found guilty of contumacy even before we knew that such proceedings were taken against him. It is usual, I believe, under such circumstances, to make an allowance from the property to the wife and children of the accused person, proportioned to their rank and the station in society which they have filled. You may judge of my surprise, then, Francis, when I found that the sum of ten thousand livres per annum is all that is granted for the support of myself and Julie during the absence of the count."

"Accept it not, my dear madam," cried Francis de Langy; "accept it not at the hands of this man. Here, in St. Medard, you will not want it. You know how willingly, how gladly, I will share everything with you; and, thank God, I have abundance by my uncle's kindness, which no one can take away from me. What I suspect and what I know of this intendant matters not; his designs are all selfish, and he is working for them by base and ungenerous means."

"You are uncharitable, Francis," said the Abbé Arnoux: "in this instance, it is not the intendant who is to blame, but the court, or the administrator of the sequestered domains. With them rests the discredit of having made so small an allowance for the support of Madame d'Artonne."

"But depend upon it," replied the young man, vehemently, "the intendant is at the bottom of the whole. Do you suppose that he is without influence over the judges and other officers of his own generality? No, no, my dear friend. He has done this. No other person whatsoever, unbiassed and impartial, would think of assigning such a pittance to the wife of the Count d'Artonne."

"But, of course," said the abbé, "they could only act according to law."

"Alas!" exclaimed Francis de Langy, "what is law in France? The will of the king; excellent, perhaps, when we have the extraordinary combination of a good monarch, good ministers, and good magistrates; but terrible as an instrument of tyranny, where the private passions of men are suffered to interfere.—But how, dear lady," he continued, taking the countess's hand, "how have you contrived to defray the expenses of your journey hither? All that was in the chateau was given to the count. Why did you not write to me? Is not all I have yours and Julie's?"

"Luckily, Francis, I did not need your kindness," replied the countess; "I had the lands assigned as my own dowry. Those they could not sequester; and the tenants came eagerly in to pay their rents, even before they were due, otherwise I should have had to apply to the intendant for an advance of the pitiful sum allowed me. I think I would rather have died."

"It was what he aimed at," cried Francis de Langy, eagerly; "it was what he aimed at. Oh! how I rejoice that the villain has been disappointed! He sought to bind you to him, to cast a net round you, to force you to depend upon him. But, thank God, he has failed!"

"Francis, Francis!" exclaimed the abbé, "is this Christian charity? You are too vehement, my dear boy; you are far too vehement. One would think, to hear you, that this intendant was your rival for the hand of our fair friend Julie, here."

Francis smiled bitterly, saying, "I know him, my excellent friend, better than you do."

"Nay," answered the abbé, "I know him not at all; I never saw the man. But I once heard his voice, which seemed to be sweet and gentle."

"I do know him," replied Francis de Langy, more calmly, but still in a decided tone; "and I feel sure that ere long

Madame d'Artonne will discover that he is not without an object in all his proceedings. It is right that both she and Julie should be upon their guard, for now he is armed with greater power than ever, and may, perchance, seek to make a traffic of his sovereign's mercy, as I know he has heretofore done of his justice."

"I am afraid you are right, Francis," answered the countess; "but here comes a servant to say that supper is ready, I suppose; so let us banish all those bitter thoughts for a time, and draw as much happiness from our glad meeting as possible. We may, perhaps, have one evening of peace; who can tell what to-morrow may bring?"

"Who, indeed?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DAYS rolled by, as they will in joy or sorrow—weeks passed, as they will pass whether man would have them fleet or stay—and Francis de Langy was still at the Chateau of St. Medard with those he best loved. It must not be thought, however, that time flew without anxiety or without change, although, to say sooth, the interruptions of the calm were but few and not very remarkable. Tidings came from time to time connected with the suit regarding the heirship of De Langy; this step or that had been taken; and the marquis wrote twice or thrice in terms of great kindness and affection to his supposed son, assuring him that he felt a lively interest in all the proceedings. He told him also in the same letters, that, although he had applied both to the king and his ministers in regard to the Count d'Artonne, he had made but little progress in his suit, the constant answer being that nothing could be done until the count surrendered and took his trial, in which event the most favourable view would be taken of his case. Once, indeed, he said the king had answered him angrily, reminding him how he himself had pleaded against a murderer, and bidding him remember that the royal word had been pledged on that occasion not to show any lenity where the plea only was, that death had occurred in a chance encounter.

No news of the Count d'Artonne, however, reached the chateau, though Jean Marais visited Senlis daily, and means were taken to ensure that no letter should miscarry or message remain undelivered; and thus anxiety was kept alive in the breasts of the whole party, the arrival of the post and the return of Jean Marais from the town being two regular

seasons of expectation and disappointment every day. At other times, the hours slipped by in that dreary sort of state which is sure to be produced by long-continued uncertainty. The mind habituates itself to anxiety, takes advantage of any circumstance to limit its influence to fixed periods, and in the intervals, though it cannot altogether cast it off, bears it almost unconsciously.

It were vain to say that Julie and Francis de Langy were not happy. They loved and were together, and that is happiness. The interchange of mutual thoughts, the words and looks of affection, the morning or the evening ramble, the united contemplation of nature's face, the reading the same page, the exploring untrodden paths through the lore of other times, or flying on the wings of fancy through the lustrous atmosphere of poetic dreams, the giving themselves up to walk hand in hand under the guidance of some great master of the lyre, as did the old Italian poet through the worlds of his imagination, was enough to fill many a day with pleasures; not so bright, perhaps, as many others, but which pass not away altogether like the enjoyments of sense, and, at all events, leave no stain and bitterness behind.

The calm order of the Chateau de St. Medard underwent no interruption. The Abbé Arnoux pursued his usual studious course, remained reading the greater part of the day, visited the sick and the poor in the neighbourhood for several hours ere nightfall, and listened to the conversation of others during the evening, adding from time to time a comment or a lesson, in which very often childlike simplicity was mingled with manly wisdom.

Little alteration was caused in the habits of Louise Pelet by the arrival of the Countess d'Artonne and her daughter. With Marie, the countess's pretty maid, she seemed at first to cultivate a certain sort of intimacy; but, as soon as she had done everything to render her completely at home in the chateau, she handed her over naturally to the tender attentions of Jean Marais, who certainly did his best to make the time pass pleasantly to the fair stranger.

Three days after the arrival of the countess at the chateau, however, Louise ran into the library where her young master was seeking for a book, and, stopping directly before him, looked in his face with a peculiar smile, saying, "Ah! she is very pretty; ah! she is very charming, and a dear, good girl, I think, too;" and before Francis de Langy could make any reply, she was out of the room again, with a nod and a laugh, as if she would have added, "I know all about it, and judge it will do very well."

Days, we have said, and weeks had gone, the aspect of the year was changed, bright skies had passed away, and dull

heavy clouds, borne upon a whistling and fitful wind, swept over the heavens, occasionally pelting against the windows of the chateau in dull and pattering sleet, occasionally falling in large flakes. There had been a heavy storm during the whole of one night, the wind had howled in hollow gusts about the chimneys, the fire had blazed clear and bright, as if the air was frosty, and the next morning, when the party rose, the ground was entirely white, and two or three inches of snow lay upon the window-cills. A fog hung over the whole scene, not very thick, indeed, but sufficient to make the neighbouring trees look dim and ghastly, while fine small particles of frozen rain kept falling continually, hourly increasing the heaps below.

"I think we must confine ourselves to the chateau for the day," said Francis de Langy, "unless something should call me to Senlis."

It was about two o'clock when he spoke; at three the post arrived, and a single letter was put into his hand. He instantly recognised the writing of the Count d'Artonne, and broke the seal in haste. There was nothing but a blank page within; and remembering the signs which had been agreed upon between himself and the count, Francis de Langy concluded that Monsieur d'Artonne was near, but in circumstances of great danger. He determined, therefore, immediately to go out and ride about the country in the hope of meeting him; but at the same time he judged it would be better not to harass the mind of Julie and Madame d'Artonne by informing them that he had received such an intimation of the count's proximity and danger. Folding up the paper hastily, then, he said, "I shall be obliged to go out, I fear;" and, turning to the servant who had brought the letter, but had not yet quitted the room, he added, "Tell Jean Marais that he must accompany me immediately on horseback."

Julie gazed at him earnestly with an inquiring look, but he made no answer to it; and merely saying that he would be back before dark, he left the room and proceeded to the stables. Mounting his horse as soon as it could be prepared, he issued forth and rode along towards Senlis. Ere he had gone far, however, he paused, turned back, and took out several dogs with him, but refused the company of the game-keeper, much to the worthy man's astonishment.

Jean Marais, who was the most discreet of valets, expressed no wonder and made no observation, but rode after his master, looking carefully to the right and left as they proceeded. Sometimes they took the high-road, sometimes the byways; but when they were within about a mile of Senlis they turned to the right, made a circuit, and came round towards the

chateau by another path; then, diverging, they proceeded farther into the country, tracing almost every road within several miles of St. Medard before night set in. The day was as miserable as can be conceived; chilly, foggy, varying every hour from thin falling drift to large flakes of heavy snow, while sometimes a drizzling rain showed itself, but quickly left off again; and as night came on, the intensity of the cold increased. The dogs, which had at first rushed joyfully forth, barking and shaking their ears, and rolling in the snow, now trotted dully behind with hanging heads and disconsolate looks, finding neither game nor amusement. Jean Marais, on his part, bore up stoutly, consoled himself with a low whistle as he followed his master, and did not even seem surprised when Francis de Langy turned round and said, "Do not whistle, Jean Marais."

"Oh, very well, sir," replied the valet; and, riding a little nearer, he added, "This is a pleasant day, sir; like a sullen woman in a fit of the vapours, not knowing whether to cry, sulk, or scratch. But it is growing dusky, sir."

"I know," answered Francis de Langy; "but I shall not go home till night falls."

"No, sir, I suppose not," said his companion; "but I was thinking that if you were to take the other road which runs from Senlis to Chantilly, and thence come round by Lachapelle, we might stumble upon something. As we passed by the end, about ten minutes ago, I thought some one whistled down there."

"Indeed!" cried Francis de Langy eagerly; "I heard nothing of the kind, and I intended to take that road the other way after we had passed through the village. Are you sure you heard a whistle?"

"Not quite," replied Jean Marais; "but I think old Roland is; for, as he was trotting along between you and me, looking as dull as a farmer's wife coming from market with her eggs unsold, he stopped and cocked up one ear, bringing round his head towards the lane, as much as to say, 'What do you want down there?'"

"Let us return!" cried Francis de Langy. "You go the same way we have come; I will take the next turning and ride round by the paths through the wood. Go on till you reach the first road on the left, then down it, and we are sure to meet."

"Oh, I know every inch of the way," replied Jean Marais; "and if I hear my whistler again, I suppose I must stay till you come?"

This being settled, master and servant separated, the dogs following Francis de Langy as their oldest acquaintance. The young gentleman quickened his pace and rode round as he

had said, but he met with nothing till he issued forth upon the road which Jean Marais had mentioned, nor heard a sound except the chattering of some birds in the wood. Night was beginning to fall apace, and he just saw the dim figure of Jean Marais advancing slowly, when one of the dogs at his side stopped and snuffed at something on the ground, giving, at the same time, a low growl towards the wood. Francis de Langy instantly sprang to the ground, and bending down, saw the mark of a footstep on the snow.

"Down, dog, down!" he said, as the hound leaped up upon him. "If there be any one there, and a friend to St. Medard, let him whistle three times."

He spoke loud, but one faint whistle was the only reply. "Here, Jean Marais!" he cried, "take my horse; there is somebody here: keep back the dogs for the present;" and, pushing through the bushes, he traced the footsteps, which were distinctly marked, into the wood."

Several of the hounds would follow, notwithstanding the chidings of Jean Marais; but Francis de Langy kept them behind, till one of them tried to rush past him with a loud bark, and Francis saw before him, by the light that glistened from the snow, a man sitting at the foot of a tree, in an attitude of extreme lassitude.

"Good God! is it you?" he cried, advancing to the side of the Count d'Artonne, and chiding back the dogs.

"Yes, indeed," replied the count faintly; "but I am exhausted and worn out. Yesterday I was hunted from Beauvais, and walked for twelve or thirteen hours without stopping. To-day I have found every road I wished to take guarded against me, and I had crept in here in despair. Francis, I fear you are come too late."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Francis de Langy; "do not say that: you are close to St. Medard, where we can easily conceal you for some time.—Jean Marais! Jean Marais!" he continued, raising his voice.

"Here, sir, here!" cried Jean Marais, coming forward. "Ah, monsieur! is it you? What! we have found you at length, and in bad plight too, it seems! Well, precautions are never taken in vain; if they don't serve one purpose they'll serve another. I thought I might want something to keep out the cold when my young master determined to enjoy the beauties of to-day; so I e'en filched a biscuit and a little wine. Monsieur will forgive me if you drink it, Monsieur d'Artonne. But take the biscuit first, take the biscuit first," he continued; "if your stomach is empty, as I judge it must be by your sitting on the snow, the wine would do you harm without something to eat."

Eagerly did the count devour the light food that Jean Ma-

rais had brought, and then putting to his lips the small dried gourd, about the size of a strong man's fist, which the provident valet had not unfrequently with him to supply his own or other people's necessities, he took a long draught, saying, when he had done, "Thank God! I have not eaten or drunk anything for six-and-thirty hours."

"Good practice for Lent!" observed Jean Marais, receiving back the gourd and shaking it at his ear; "but how is this, Monsieur le Comte, it is half full still. I shall carry it more lightly when it is empty. Finish it, finish it, sir!"

The count took and drunk again, saying, "This has saved my life, I believe. Lend me your hand, Francis; I think I can walk now."

"You must not walk far, sir," replied Jean Marais. "My horse will carry you to the chateau, and perhaps I had better carry you to the horse: it is not fifty yards off."

"Oh, no," answered the count; "I can walk that distance."

"But the footsteps! the footsteps!" said Jean Marais; "snow tells tales, sir, as every good hunter knows."

"Oh, we will soon efface the footsteps," replied Francis de Langy. "What do you think I brought the dogs for? Here; hunt them over the ground, and call them close together after us, as Monsieur d'Artonne and I walk towards the horses."

"On my life," cried Jean Marais, "he improves rapidly!—he will beat me at my own trade ere long. Sir, I honour you for your device;" and, making the dogs spread themselves abroad, he soon covered the whole space of ground with traces of their feet; and then, gathering them together, he followed close behind, while the count, leaning on the arm of his young friend, slowly made his way towards the spot where the horses had been left.

Monsieur d'Artonne mounted, though with difficulty; and, turning their bridles homeward, they rode along in the darkness, the valet walking by the side of the horses and the dogs following him.

"We had better avoid the village, sir," he said, speaking to his master, "for there may be people looking out; and then, when we get to St. Medard, how do you intend to get in? You must not let your servants see the count."

"Certainly not," replied Francis de Langy; "but you must go on before. Jean Marais, and contrive to get them out of the way. Then we will come round by the back of the farm, through the park gate on the north side, and into the chateau by the little north door, which will bring us directly to the back staircase leading to the corridor by my room."

"It won't do, sir," said Jean Marais; "a thousand things

might put us out. There's the accursed poultrywoman with her hens and turkeys; the gamekeeper will be looking after his dogs as soon as he sees them, giving them their soup, and going backwards and forwards for an hour; the groom will be staring forth for the return of his horses; and the butler has been cooling his old nose for this half-hour, depend upon it, watching for the arrival of his dear young master, and thinking you frozen to death. How am I to dispose of all of them? No, no! my task must be within human capability. If you will take my advice, you will stop at the little summer-house at the west corner of the park: we can easily open the window, and the count can get in without ever dismounting. There's a sofa in it for him to lie down upon, and when all is still in the chateau we can bring him in without anybody perceiving it. When he is safely deposited, you and I will go back together as we came, only I will lead my horse as long as we are upon the road, in order that, if there be any traces of footsteps left, they may continue to the end."

Francis de Langy was too wise to oppose any real amendment of his plan, and the suggestion of Jean Marais was instantly acted upon. The only thing that went at all contrary to their wishes was, that they met two peasants returning homewards; but, as nothing resulted affecting this tale, we need not stop to describe the anxiety which their appearance produced. As the small light that existed was derived from the snow, neither party could distinguish the other with any degree of accuracy, and the peasants did not even pause to say "Good night," not knowing that it was their young seigneur who passed them.

The summer-house to which Jean Marais had referred occupied an angle of the park wall, with a window looking each way; and though from the side of the park it was raised by some six or seven steps above the general level of the ground, from the road, which there passed over a bank, the window-cill was not higher than the head of a tall horse. Francis de Langy easily contrived to open the window, and aided the count with one hand while Jean Marais held the bridle of the horse, and at the same time offered his stout shoulder as a step for Monsieur d'Artonne to put his foot upon. The entrance would have been easily effected by any man in health and vigour, but the state of exhaustion into which the count had fallen rendered the feat somewhat difficult. It was accomplished at length, however; and then, proceeding along the park wall, master and man returned to the chateau, and entered by the great gates.

It happened luckily that they did so, for they found a lieutenant of the *maréchaussée* in the hall and two or three

archers at the door. Francis de Langy started when he saw them, and the colour came into his cheek; but advancing promptly to the officer, he demanded, in a somewhat stern tone, to what he was indebted for the honour of his visit. The lieutenant replied very civilly, however, that, having learned the Count d'Artonne with several servants was then residing in the Chateau of St. Medard, he had come thither to notify to the domestics that the Count d'Artonne being a fugitive from justice, and condemned *par contumace*, all persons were forbidden under severe penalties to harbour or comfort him.

"This, you know, sir," continued the lieutenant, "is a usual and necessary proceeding, otherwise I should not have intruded upon you at all, especially at this late hour of the evening."

Francis de Langy gave him no encouragement to remain; and finding that the notification had been made before he arrived, he bowed him out of the chateau, and saw the iron gates closed upon him and his men. On further inquiry, Francis found cause to suspect that, notwithstanding all his courteous expressions, the lieutenant of the *maréchaussée* had further objects in view than the simple one which he stated; for the archers had gone over the lower parts of the house, and had made manifold inquiries of all the servants, both in the chateau and the offices around, as to the persons who had been seen coming and going in the neighbourhood. Of course they had gained no information, and the answers of the domestics were so distinct and straightforward as to leave no room for suspicion even by a suspicious race.

Whispering to Jean Marais to carry some refreshment to the count, Francis proceeded to join the countess and Julie in the saloon. The eyes of both were turned upon him with an eager glance as soon as he entered, and it was evident that they conjectured rightly what was the object of his long ride on such a dreary day. He, too, was not a little anxious to communicate the result to those most deeply interested; but the good Abbé Arnoux was seated in his chair by the fire; and, with every sort of reverence for his excellent preceptor, Francis did not think fit to entrust the fate of the Count d'Artonne to the keeping of more persons than necessary.

"I am very wet," he said, "so I will go and change my dress and be with you again immediately;" but, bending down over Julie as he passed her, he whispered, "Your father is safe, my beloved. Give your mother some intimation whenever you can without being overheard."

He was, indeed, as he had told them, drenched to the skin, and casting off his clothes he proceeded to put on drier

garments. Nor, if the truth must be said, did he stop there: he paid some attention to his toilet, wrung the wet from the thick curls of his hair, and arranged them as he fancied best; for Francis de Langy was, after all, a sharer in all the feelings of youth, and was not at all indisposed to look well in the eyes of her he loved. He had not yet finished when he heard a footfall near his room door; the next moment, without any application for admission, it opened, and the face of Jean Marais presented itself, gazing eagerly around. Withdrawing a step, he beckoned to somebody in the corridor, saying in a low tone, "Come, come; there is nobody here," and the Count d'Artonne himself entered and cast himself into a chair.

"Always take an opportunity when you have got it," cried Jean Marais: "the archers have given the servants enough of gossip in the kitchen for two hours at least; so, leaving old Joseph to keep guard, I brought the count in at once. But now, monsieur, where do you intend to put him? for we had better domicile him in the first instance."

"In there," replied Francis de Langy, pointing to the door of a small chamber which was situated in one of the square towers of the chateau, and had been used by him as a study during his boyhood: "in there; there is no communication with it but through this room. It is the safest place in the house."

"But Mademoiselle Julie will like to see her father sometimes, I should think," said Jean Marais, "and she will have to pass through your room, monsieur."

"Julie will not object, and the count will trust her there," replied Francis de Langy, with a smile at his servant's affectation of prudery. "Is it not so, my dear count?"

"I would trust her with you anywhere," answered the count, holding out his hand to him warmly: "you are her brother, Francis, till you are her husband, and Julie may well regard you in such a light."

"Well, well, then," said Jean Marais, laughing, "I don't object, either; but I will go bring monsieur some supper, for hunger can be a worse enemy than all the maréchaussée put together."

"But my wife and my daughter, Francis?" cried the Count d'Artonne: "tell me, what of them?—Are they here? That man's words seem to imply that they were either in the house or coming soon.—Oh, Francis! you cannot imagine what it is, after one has been a wanderer upon the face of the wide world—cast upon the cold compassion or mercenary attention of strangers, often deprived even of that—lonely, desolate, unfriended, with none to help, counsel, support, or console; you know not what it is, I say, even to think of

being restored to the warm touch of kindred affection—to the embrace of wife and child. Are they here, or will they arrive soon?

The count was so much agitated that Francis judged it might be dangerous in his weakened state to tell him that Madame d'Artonne and Julie were actually in the chateau; and he consequently replied, "They are coming soon, my dear count. I hope you will see them to-morrow. Our good friend the Abbé Arnoux is here, but for many reasons we must not let him know of your being in the chateau. I will go and speak with him, however, lest he think me long absent. In the mean while take some refreshment; I will be back directly. No one will come in but those we can trust."

Thus saying, he left the count, and calling Jean Marais from the foot of the stairs, told him that he wished Monsieur d'Artonne to be left in ignorance that the countess and Julie were actually in the chateau, till he had taken some refreshment; after which he summoned good Louise Pelet into the great saloon, which was vacant, and without a fire.

"*Ah! mon Dieu, monsieur!*" exclaimed the quick little woman, "why do you stand here in the cold after the miserable ride you must have had? I will run and get some wood."

"No, no, Louise," cried Francis de Langy, seizing her arm; "I have but a few words to say to you. Can I trust you with a great secret, Louise?"

"Certainly, sir," replied the *bonne*.

"I believe I can, Louise," continued the young gentleman; "but this one is a secret on which my liberty depends, and perhaps the life of a person very dear to me."

"Speak! speak, sir!" answered Louise: "that is to say, if it is needful; for I am not fond of secrets, though I never told one of my own in my life, or any other person's either."

Francis de Langy gave her full credit for the truth of her assertion. Louise was much too rapid and taciturn to be at all addicted to gossip—a disease peculiar to slow and idle people, for no tongue is busy about other persons' affairs which has anything better to be busy about. He then told her succinctly the fact of the count being in the chateau, and pointed out the danger which might exist if the most remote suspicion of such a circumstance got abroad amongst the servants. Louise listened in silence for some time, though she had great difficulty in keeping herself still, every now and then stretching out her foot to rub a spot upon the parquet which seemed to her not quite so well polished as the rest. She felt it impossible, however, to wait for the conclusion of what the young gentleman had to say; and at

length, seeming to think that he had spoken with unreasonable prolixity, she broke in, exclaiming, "Yes, yes; I understand all. I'll go and make him a bed.—In your study, you say? The best place in the world: nobody can find him there. I understand it all. Not a word, sir! not a word!—I'll not speak a word;" and away she went, without stopping to hear any more.

Five minutes after, she entered the room in which the count sat, with Jean Marais as his attendant at supper, bearing upon her head and shoulders a mattress twice as big as herself, as we often see an industrious little ant carrying away the body of a bee, or the quarter of a beetle, apparently big enough to crush half-a-dozen of its diminutive race. Both the count and Jean Marais started at the apparition; but good Louise only made a slight curtsy to the count, saying, "Good evening, sir; good evening; a bad night this for travelling;" and without more ado she dragged the mattress after her into the inner room.

The next moment she called to Jean Marais, and bade him fetch a bedstead from a chamber she named—telling him, also, where he would find a proper implement for taking it to pieces.

Before her arrangements were complete and the bed made to her satisfaction, Francis de Langy returned and sat down by the count, whom he found greatly refreshed.

"A little repose," said Monsieur d'Artonne, "and I think I shall be as well as ever. I trust, however, Francis, that I shall not have to quit your hospitable roof before I have seen my dear wife and Julie."

Francis smiled. "I hope not," he replied, judging that his friend was now better able to bear the meeting. "At all events, there can be no necessity for your doing so. Perhaps you may be able to see them to-night, if——"

"They are in the chateau!" exclaimed the count, seizing his young host's hand. "They are in the chateau! I thought so all along. Oh! let them come as soon as possible."

"I must contrive to get rid of my good friend the abbé first," said Francis; "he is with them in the saloon.—Louise," he continued, after a moment's thought, "can you not go down and call Madame d'Artonne out?"

Louise, however, was still busy in transforming the little study into a bedchamber; and until she had done she replied nothing but "Directly, sir, directly.—There, go in, Monsieur le Comte," she continued, as soon as the room was ready: "you will be better there than here, and I and this *vaurien*, Jean Marais, will wait upon you. Now, monsieur; I'll call her. Am I to bring her here?"

"Let me speak with her first," replied Francis de Langy.

He accordingly met Madame d'Artonne at the foot of the stairs, and while he was whispering a few words to her, Julie joined them. The moment after, he led the countess up to his room door, and she and her daughter went in. When they came forth, an hour afterwards, their eyes were red, but smiles were upon their lips.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THREE days passed over in the Chateau of St. Medard without any incident worth noticing. The snow, as the snow of November generally does, melted away; the season relaxed in severity, and Nature's face assumed a more smiling aspect. Jean Marais was commissioned to keep a watch upon everything that passed around, in order to guard against anything like surprise; and his report each day was, that the troops of the *maréchaussée* were wonderfully busy all over the surrounding country, and evidently upon the look out for the escaped prisoner. Yet it was clear that they were now at fault; and, like hounds that have lost the scent, they were running about without any clue to his retreat. Monsieur d'Artonne himself speedily recovered his strength, and passed the time very happily, relating to his wife, his daughter, and Francis de Langy, all the various events which had befallen him since they met: the flight, the pursuit, the difficulties, the dangers of the hair's-breadth escapes, which, to him who told and those who heard, afforded matter of deeper interest than might be found in them by the reader.

On the fourth day, however, Francis de Langy having ridden out on some business to Senlis, and the countess and Julie being seated with the count, Louise Pelet suddenly entered the room where they were, with a face of unusual agitation.

"*Ma foi!* they seem coming down here!" she said.

"Who?—who?" exclaimed the count and countess, both starting up.

"Why, those rogues the archers, to be sure," she replied. "Luckily the chateau stands high, and one can see them a long way off; but here they come down the avenue;" and, turning their eyes towards the window, the whole party clearly distinguished some ten or twelve archers riding along the road at a brisk pace towards the iron gates of the chateau.

"I had better go out into the park," said the count; and Jean Marais, entering at the same moment, proposed a

be something behind. He had tried two, and was approaching the one which concealed the closet, when Jean Marais gave a start, seemed to listen, and then, raising his voice as loud as he could, continued his conversation with the old servant in a noisy tone, talking about the wind and the weather, and a thousand trifles.

It seemed so evident that he wished to drown some other sound, that the officer listened with all his ears, and then turning round, exclaimed in a stern tone, "Silence, sir!"

Jean looked confused, but held his tongue; and in the stillness that succeeded quick steps were heard running along overhead. "Ho, ho!" cried the officer; "run, Paul—run to the end of the staircase!" and leaving the room as fast as possible, he hastened with one of the men to search the upper story, while the two others proceeded to examine the rest of the apartments on the first floor.

Jean Marais took care to accompany the officer; but when they reached the top of the stairs, he looked out of the window into the park, and after gazing forth for a moment drew in his head with a well-satisfied smile. Every hole and corner was ransacked; the lieutenant and the archers were completely puzzled. There were two or three small staircases, indeed, from the upper part of the building; but still it seemed that with the precautions they had taken no one could have made his escape from the chateau. Several women-servants were found in the upper story, busy in their household tasks; but they all positively declared that they had never seen the Count d'Artonne in their lives, and that he certainly was not in the Chateau of St. Medard. The valet in the mean time chuckled gaily with an affectation of concealing his amusement, which succeeded in irritating the lieutenant of *maréchaussée* so as to make him turn and shake his fist at him, saying, "*Coquin!* I think you are trying to make a fool of me."

"Not at all, sir; not at all," replied Jean Marais, with a grave face. "I was only thinking that you must have come here solely with a view of exercise, and when I am honoured with the company of gentlemen of your cloth I do not object to give them a good march. '*J'aime promener mes archers,*' as Cartouche used to say; but, now that you have examined the top of the house, you have quite forgotten the bottom. There are the cellars. What an oversight you have made! and, besides, it is quite possible that this gentleman you are seeking may have concealed himself behind some of the wine. You had better come down and remove it out of the bins."

"Do you mean to assert, sir, that he has never been here?" demanded the officer.

"Nay, I won't say that," replied Jean Marais; "I will

“speak to nothing beyond my own knowledge. He may have been here when I was a baby in arms, or at any time, indeed, before I entered my master’s service; neither can I pretend to declare that he is not here at the present moment: he may be so without my knowing it. All I can say is, that from the time I was first groom of the chambers in the Chateau de St. Medard, I have never seen him nor heard of his being here.”

“here is your young master, mademoiselle?” demanded the officer, turning to one of the maids.

“I went out early this morning, sir,” replied the girl.

“What do you call early?” asked the officer.

“Oh, in the grey of the morning,” she answered.

“Does he go out every day?” was the next question.

“He has done so lately,” said the girl, “but not so early as to-day.”

“Do you know where he is gone to, sir?” continued the lieutenant, turning to Jean Marais.

“I mind my own business, sir,” replied the valet, sullenly, “and never ask my master any impertinent questions.”

“You can give impertinent answers, though,” replied the officer, moving towards the stairs.

“Have you searched all these rooms?” he continued, when he had joined the archers whom he had left below.

“Every hole and corner,” answered the men; “but he might have got down by that little staircase.”

“That he could not,” answered Jean Marais, “for the door at the bottom is locked. You have given yourselves a good deal of trouble and disturbed a peaceable family for nothing; and if I had my will I would march you up and down these staircases till you hadn’t a leg to stand upon.”

The officer gave him an angry glance, but said nothing; and descending to the ground-floor he made the old butler open the cellars, judging that Jean Marais’ mention of them might be a stratagem to prevent him from searching them. He then returned to the hall, and after pausing a moment in thought went up-stairs again, forbidding any one but two of his archers to follow. His steps were heard sounding along the passages for some minutes; and it must be confessed that the valet’s heart beat somewhat more quickly than usual, till at length the officer and his companions descended without having made any further discovery.

“I never thought he was there,” said the lieutenant, mounting his horse; “and indeed I am sure he escaped us that snowy night. The labourer at Lachapelle told us he had seen three men whom he did not know. Depend upon it the count was one of them, and is in Flanders by this time.”

Speaking thus to the exempt, who had accompanied his party, he rode away, the other merely replying, "Well, it cannot be helped; we have done our duty."

The moment the last archer was seen riding down the hill, Jean Marais ran up to tell the countess that all was safe; but, as the chateau was in a state of great confusion for some time after, the maids and the men running hither and thither, and talking over the whole affair in separate groups, nearly an hour passed before an opportunity could be found of liberating the count from his strait confinement.

Francis returned not long after, and at first felt a glow of indignation rise in his cheek at the thought of the Chateau of St. Medard being subject to such perquisitions. His uncle, however, had taught him to examine the foundation of all his feelings before he gave way to them; and he could not help smiling at his own anger when he remembered that the *maréchaussée* had in reality just cause for the proceeding which had irritated him.

From that day everything proceeded very quietly; the police of that district had come to the conclusion that the count had got beyond their sphere of action, and the numerous parties which had been inquiring for him in all the villages round about were quietly recalled to their quarters. Monsieur d'Artonne might have passed his time at the chateau in perfect safety if he could have been content to endure the confinement, but gradually it became burdensome to him. The hope of obtaining any assurance of pardon before trial gradually faded away; the reflection that the frontier was very near continually offered an object of desire and expectation, and from time to time plans were discussed for getting him safely across into Flanders. Various obstacles presented themselves for some weeks, but at length it was determined that the attempt should be made, and Jean Marais was once more called to council as to the best means of effecting the object in view.

The only great difficulty seemed to be the want of a proper passport. The frontier was at that period strictly guarded, both by the police and custom-house officers, and no French subject was allowed to quit his native country without permission of the government. This obstacle for a time seemed even to put the inventive genius of the valet at fault; but at length, after much consideration, he said, "I will do it, sir; I will do it. I must have a week, though, and then you shall have the passport."

"How do you intend to manage?" demanded Francis de Langy.

"Ask no questions, sir," replied the valet: "this is a business with which you must not have anything to do. I will

manage the whole and stand the risk myself: only, if I get into a scrape you must do the best you can for me, and try to obtain my pardon."

"That I will certainly do, Jean," replied Francis de Langy; "but consider well what you are about, Jean. I am sure Monsieur d'Artonne would rather risk passing the frontier without a passport than have you to do anything dishonourable or ruinous to yourself."

"That I would, Jean," said the count; "you must do nothing of the kind for me."

"Oh, as to dishonour," said Jean Marais, "there is no dishonour in cheating a pack of rogues; and if it prove ruinous, it will be but want of luck. I will do it; I will do it. You shall have a passport, monsieur; but nobody must ask any questions."

At the end of the week, faithful to his word, Jean Marais laid before the count a passport in due form for Monsieur Latrobe, merchant of Lyons, travelling into Flanders and England. He also produced various papers fitted to identify the said Monsieur Latrobe; and upon the strictest examination that the count and Francis could give, the whole seemed to be in due form and perfectly correct. Jean Marais, whose love of adventure was unconquerable, declared his determination to accompany the count himself, in the quality of a servant, till he was safe upon the sea; and, everything having been arranged, Monsieur d'Artonne took leave of his wife and daughter on the night of the 23d of December, and, passing unobserved out of the Chateau de St. Medard, once more commenced the anxious life of a fugitive.

CHAPTER XL.

THE night was dark, but clear and frosty, the sky was sparkling with stars; and as the Count d'Artonne and Jean Marais walked quietly through the park and out at a distant gate, the valet hurried on, looking neither to the right nor to the left, while the count, on the contrary, gazed up more than once towards the sky, and twice paused to take a last look at the Chateau of St. Medard. The one thought of nothing but the enterprise in which he was engaged, and how to carry it on successfully, while the other thought fondly and tenderly of those he was leaving, and calculated, with a sickening sensation of apprehension, the distant period when they might meet again, if ever. Memory, too, so easily

awakened by anything which speaks of the past, ran back over the times gone by, and contrasted the peaceful happiness which had fled with the anxious care of the present and the stormy aspect of the future. The count sighed deeply as they walked through the gate and closed it behind them; but Jean Marais whistled a few light notes of a popular air of that day, feeling all his faculties of mind and body invigorated by the clear frosty air of the night. Such it is to be accustomed or unaccustomed to vicissitudes.

After proceeding five miles, the valet stopped before a shed on the edge of a low marshy piece of ground; and, opening the large doors which shut out the cold wind, he led forth two stray horses, which he had bought four or five days before at a distant fair. Both were saddled and bridled, and upon each was a pair of saddle-bags. "I hope you are learned in the price of silks, sir," he said; "for the right-hand pocket is full of samples, which you must talk very learnedly about in case of need. I bought them at Beauvais two days ago, that you might take orders for the house of Latrobe and Company, should you meet with a purchaser."

The count smiled; and, to say truth, his feeling of confidence revived from the light bearing of his companion; for there is nothing which so much depresses as the aspect of despondency, and every shade of fear and apprehension is decidedly infectious.

Mounting their horses, they rode on, avoiding Senlis and taking the way towards Tournay; nor did they meet with any adventure worthy of record during the whole of their journey. It was performed as tranquilly as if no dangers of any kind had beset their path; and indeed so it often is in life, than those things which we most apprehend, and in regard to which there existed the most reasonable cause for dread, pass over easily and without a mischance, while Fate overtakes us in a summer day's sport, or strikes its victim in the midst of long-anticipated enjoyment.

Jean Marais and the count crossed the frontier without difficulty, their passports being duly examined and registered; and the whole seemed so easy and gradual that, as they rode along within the territory of Flanders, Monsieur d'Artonne could hardly believe that he was in another land, and that the danger which menaced him was past. He thanked God, however, with his whole heart, when he entered the town of Ypres, and heard the jargon of a different country spoken merrily in the market-place.

Directing their steps towards Nieuport, they were obliged to wait for several days before a ship was found ready to sail for England, and then the only one that they met with was merely a broad-bottomed, round-headed Flemish barge.

But the weather was clear and the wind favourable; and Jean Marais saw the count depart cheerfully, leaving the shores of the continent behind him for that little island which had acquired in former days the name of "The Wanderer's Home."

When this was accomplished, our friend Jean sold the count's horse in the first market he could find, and began to retread his steps towards the Chateau de St. Medard; but in this instance he committed a great error, which he would have avoided had he enjoyed the advantage of studying under our respected friend Rob Roy. We are told that it was the practice of that skilful merchant never to return from any of his trading expeditions by the same road that he went. But Jean Marais, over-confident from great success, forgot that very important maxim, and approached the frontiers of France, following the identical line by which he had quitted them. On approaching the gates of the town of Arras, a momentary doubt of the prudence of his proceedings came across his mind, and drawing in his horse he hesitated as to whether he had not better go back again. As misfortune would have it, however, three of the town-guard were walking up and down before the gates, trying to keep themselves warm in the cold frosty weather which had then visited the world. When Jean Marais pulled up his horse they eyed him suspiciously; and, seeing that to retreat might be more dangerous than to advance, he quietly rode on, and was passing forward to the inn when one of the guard stopped him, exclaiming, "Holloa, comrade! whither away so fast? Be so good as to show your passport here."

"Oh, with all my heart!" replied Jean Marais, his usual coolness not abandoning him. "Here it is."

The soldier took it, and walked with it into a little house by the side of the gate, where he and another man conferred so long that Jean Marais began to think the circumstance rather suspicious, and was considering whether it might not be quite as well to put spurs to his horse and gallop away as fast as possible. Before he could execute this half-formed purpose, however, the guard and his companion came out again, and told him with a significant air to dismount. At a sign the other two soldiers came up, and the unpleasant words, "You are the very man we have been wanting," sounded in poor Jean's ears like a clap of thunder.

"Where is your companion?" was the next question, as they led him into the guard-house.

"What! do you mean Monsieur Latrobe?" said Jean, determined to put a good face upon it to the last. "He is gone to England; but why do you stop me? Is my passport not in order? If there is any fault in it, it is his, for he gave it

to me. I am but a poor ignorant servant, and cannot tell whether it is right or wrong."

"The passport is forged, young man," said the commander of the guard, who was within, fixing his eyes sternly upon the prisoner; "it is forged, as you know quite well."

"Not I, indeed," said Jean Marais: "how should I? This gentleman hired me to accompany him to Nieuport. As we were to pass the frontier, he got me my passport himself: all I know of him is, that he is a very good gentleman, and has paid me well."

"I don't doubt that," replied the officer, "and the police will pay you well too. Did you ever hear the name of the Count d'Artonne?"

"To be sure," answered Jean Marais; "but this was Monsieur Latrobe, merchant of Lyons;" and, determined to turn even the mistake he had made to some account, he added, "Do you think, sir, if I had known I was travelling with a forged passport, I should have come back by the same way I went? Could not I have gone round by Peronne quite as well?"

"There is something in that," muttered the officer. "Bring in his baggage; and you, be so good as to turn out your pockets, young man. Search him; search him thoroughly."

The unpleasant process was immediately commenced, and with an eye of considerable anxiety Jean Marais saw the various articles which his bags contained pulled out one by one and laid upon the table. To say truth, he himself was not very sure of what might be found there; for he had been obliged to pack his goods and chattels hastily and in secret, snatching a moment when he could do so unobserved. Various articles of apparel appeared first; then some patterns of silk, which had got into his baggage by mistake; then some money, with one or two small trinkets he had bought in Flanders, which appeared to complete the store; and the guard, putting his hand into either side of the large leathern pockets, declared there was nothing more. Jean Marais felt a momentary triumph, but, like most other triumphs, it was soon clouded. Having finished his examination, the soldier threw down the bags carelessly on the floor, when out rolled something which at first sight appeared nothing but a two-sous piece. Jean Marais could not, however, prevent himself from turning a little pale when he beheld it, though the eye of the officer was fixed upon his countenance.

"Let me see that!" exclaimed the latter; and on its being placed in his hands he smiled grimly, asking, "What do you call this my friend? Look here! a sou polished on one side,

with the official seal cleverly engraved upon it. Now, master, what have you to say? Compare that and the stamp upon the passport."

"I know nothing of it," replied Jean Marais boldly: "my master gave it me in change as a sou; and, seeing that it was not like other sous, I thought it was some foreign coin, and put it in my bag yesterday."

"Ha!" said the officer, "ha! Away with him!—all this will be investigated hereafter. Take him to the Baudets—or, stay; call some of the town sergeants—I can't spare you;" and in the space of about five minutes poor Jean Marais found himself walking between two guards up to the town prison.

As the very first step he was thrust into a cell, where he remained for the whole of that day and the next, without communication with any one except with the jailer. On the following morning he was taken before the magistrates of the town and examined at length. Investigations in the prison ensued, and numerous proceedings, into the details of which we shall not enter, as the particulars of French procedure would be very little interesting to the English reader. Jean Marais concocted as skilful a defence as the circumstances would admit; and, although various attempts were made to induce him to inculpate others, not one word passed his lips which could in any degree affect the inhabitants of the Chateau of Medard. His caution, indeed, went so far that he did not even write to his master; and Francis de Langy remained in ignorance of his fate, and of that of the Count d'Artonne, till he suddenly received a small slip of paper from an unknown hand, containing the following notice:—"Jean Marais has been convicted of the forgery of public papers, and sentenced to eight years in irons. He is at Bicêtre."

These tidings were too true. Poor Jean Marais had been tried and condemned with very little delay, and it must be acknowledged that the sentence of his judges was just. Nevertheless, he was condemned for that which he did not himself believe to be a crime; for there are particular persons whose minds are so constituted by nature, or have been so twisted by circumstances, as to render them insusceptible of the idea of any law but that code which they form for themselves. Assuredly this is a vice; but I am afraid all the world are more or less tainted with it, for we very seldom find our appreciation of crimes and delinquencies either altogether conformable to the laws of our country or to the laws of God. A man grievously insulted by another knocks him down and beats him heartily. All this is quite contrary to the law, and yet it would be difficult to find any one who in

his heart would pronounce him culpable. In greater things, alas! it is the same; and each man picks out of the great mass of offences his own little store of reservations, which he thinks very justifiable, though harsh legislators have condemned them.

Now, nothing on earth could have persuaded Jean Marais that he was committing the least evil in the world in manufacturing a passport for the Count d'Artonne. He rather thought it laudable than otherwise; but still, as Jean Marais had a good deal of philosophy in his nature, he was perfectly prepared to be punished for it when he was caught. He did not even accuse the laws of harshness or injustice; and it seemed to him, when the whole affair was over and the sentence pronounced, that he had been playing at cards with the authorities, and that they had won the game. Perhaps nobody but a Frenchman could have viewed it in this light; but that nation has a happy instinct which leads them to make the best of everything, and Jean Marais possessed it in a very high degree. The painful part of the business, however, soon came. The order for removing the prisoners from Arras to Bicêtre arrived; and the unpleasant process of being chained to another convict and carried in a cart to the metropolitan dépôt, to wait the departure of a gang for the galleys, was gone through by our poor friend with the first feeling of despair he had ever entertained. It is a sensation which those who make the laws and frame the punishments that are intended to be the safeguards of society should take especial care never to arouse in the heart of any but the most abandoned. It was the despair of ever recovering the station and character now lost—of ever casting off the stain, the shame, and the companionship of vice—of ever doing well from that day forth to the end of life. Cautious indeed should the legislator be before, as a part of the punishment for any one offence, he says to the culprit, "Thou shalt never more return to virtue; take thy place henceforth amongst the children of crime!" and yet this is proclaimed by the sentence of almost every judge in almost every land, and will be, so long as laws are directed only to punish, and not to reform. But there is also such a thing as education in vice, as well as encouragement to it, and the great school has always been—where? Not the gaming-house, the tavern, the brothel, the den of thieves. No, readers, no: the prison! There is the finishing school, where, under the most expert masters in every kind of iniquity, young and ignorant offenders are trained up to supply worthily the vast society of rogues and vagabonds throughout Europe. Oh! had the great philanthropist, when he devoted his life to improve the corporeal treatment of prisoners, to purify the air they

breathed, and to diminish the diseases that daily carried them down to the grave—oh! had he directed his attention to change their moral treatment, to purify the atmosphere of vice which spreads around them, and to diminish the fatal diseases of the heart and mind that carry the spirit down to hell itself, he had done even a better work than the noble one he so nobly performed.

It was into one of the most abominable of these schools that Jean Marais was about to be transferred from the prison of Arras. The journey was long and terrible, and the companion to whom he was chained was one of the worst of those depraved criminals who go on in a course of habitual crime without ever stepping beyond a certain limit, so that vice and punishment succeed, like the alternations of a fever, through the whole extent of a life which is often protracted to an extraordinary length. Hardened, desperate, and abhorring all who were in any degree better than himself, his comrade of the chain proved for a certain time as unpleasant a companion as Jean Marais could have met with. He seemed to have made up his mind, as soon as he discovered that his neighbour was not what he called *affrenchi*, or free of the trade, to torment him to the utmost of his power; but Jean, who knew himself to be in no condition to resist, showed such an indomitable good humour, that he even won upon the villain who travelled by his side; and, having acquired in the prison at Clermont a few words of the *argot*, or jargon, of the fraternity, his companion applied himself to perfect him in the language which he himself spoke. Jean proved an apt scholar; and, as he was not at all unwilling to acquire any knowledge which might be useful at an after period, he showed so much zeal that his instructor imagined he was inclined to become as great a rogue as himself.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with pride and satisfaction, at the end of the fifth day, "you will soon be able *jaspiner garuche* as well as any of us, and you will find it very useful, especially if you want to *take the air*, which of course you will try for as soon as you can."

"If you mean make my escape," replied Jean Marais, "that I certainly will. Had I thought I should be condemned, I would have done so long before, for I have got out of a worse prison than Les Baudets."

"Oh, oh!" cried his companion, "then you have been in the *garuche* before! But if you want to know how to *decarer*, you and I can soon get it up between us; for I dare say I shall be your *farandel* at the *tune*, and I can always find a way to play upon the *violin*."

This latter expression somewhat puzzled our friend Jean Marais, and his countenance plainly indicated his doubt that

his companion's playing upon the violin could have any effect upon his escape.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried the other; "I mean I shall be your bedfellow at the *bagne*, and we will find a means of filing our irons."

In such instructive conversation the fourteen or fifteen convicts passed their time in the wagons that drew them towards Bicêtre, relieving the more serious considerations of making their escape, knocking the archers on the head, and other such interesting speculations, by telling stories of their lives and boasting of the offences they had committed. There are certainly two sides to the world, and on one—the side which Jean Marais now saw—all things are reversed. Instead of boasting of high deeds or making a pretence of virtuous conduct, these men seemed to place the point of honour at the other extreme of the moral line, and not only to detail with pride and satisfaction the crimes they had committed, but, as there is always a variety in vice, to fabricate iniquities they had probably never had the opportunity of plunging into, and adorning the history of their lives with a multitude of fictitious offences.

Poor Jean Marais did not become the more pleased with his society the more he saw of it; and if no other motive had induced him to determine upon making his escape, in case of his pardon not arriving very soon, the desire of delivering himself from such company would have made him take that resolution.

The convoy of prisoners stopped at Compiègne; and in talking over his situation with his companion, he expressed an eager desire to communicate the fact of his imprisonment to some persons who he thought might help him.

"Oh!" said the other, "if you've got a *hind wheel* to give me, I will soon make it run, and will find a *flyer* and some *thin* for you to *embroider*."*

Jean Marais was by this time sufficiently master of the language to understand that he meant to say, if he had a crown-piece he would soon procure him a pen, and paper to write upon; and the consequence was the production of a letter, or *babillard*, as the convict called it, which was despatched through one of their acquaintances in the town of Compiègne to Francis de Langy, at the Chateau of St. Medard. Poor Jean Marais, however, was destined yet to play his part in a great number of scenes before he obtained his liberty, and the first act of the drama was Bicêtre. Avoiding the town of Paris, the gang of convicts, with the

* "Si vous avez une roue de derrière, je la ferai courir, et vous aurez une voltigeante et de la mince pour broder."

archers accompanying it, passed on till they reached those famous heights between Villejuif and Gentilly, which have seen, perhaps, more varied kinds of sorrow and despair than any other spot upon the globe, be it where it may. This is no rash expression of the romance-writer, no extravagant exaggeration of the truth, although there have been prisons full of horror and crime which at first sight one might suppose no less dark and horrible than Bicêtre. But a few words upon the history of that place will show that we speak by the card.

Bicêtre was once a splendid chateau, built in 1204, by John, Bishop of Winchester; and it continued the scene of much revelry, vice, treason, and folly, for two centuries. Some time after that, however, its destination was changed, and it was appropriated to a threefold purpose, every one of its uses tending to render it but the abode of misery. It became a poor-house, an hospital for lunatics, and a prison. Destitution, madness, and crime were now for some centuries its tenants; and thus, could the history of Bicêtre and its inhabitants be displayed to the eyes of man, we say fearlessly that no spot upon the face of the earth would present such a record of agony as that.

It was to this dark abode that in a glowing day of the early spring Jean Marais was drawn, and passing through some iron gates and a court, which was thronged with destitute poor who there received a miserable subsistence, the wagons entered a second court, on the other side of which was the prison. At the gate the horses stopped, the archers drew up on either hand, and the convicts were marched one by one into a small bureau, where their names were put down in a register. They were then ordered to proceed, and, strictly guarded as they went, were led on into another large square court, where Jean Marais paused and gazed around him with a sickening heart and a feeling of horror and dismay.

CHAPTER XLI.

"HERE is a letter, sir, brought by the king's courier," said the old butler, just as Francis de Langy was getting into the *calèche* to proceed to Paris, in the hope of obtaining a pardon for Jean Marais; although, to speak the truth, that hope was faint, for the difficulties which had been made even to receiving any application on behalf of the Count d'Artonne were very discouraging.

Francis de Langy instantly perceived that the address was in the hand of the Viscount de St. Medard; and, breaking open the seal, he found a few lines to himself, informing him of his kind friend's safe arrival at the Isle of France, and another letter enclosed for the Abbé Arnoux. Leaving Francis to pursue his journey to Paris we must beg to look over the abbé's shoulder while he reads the contents of Monsieur de St. Medard's letter, which he did, be it remarked, with evident interest and satisfaction.

MY DEAR ABBÉ (the viscount wrote),—Here I am once more in lands which I have not seen for many years, and amidst scenes which, though they were once perfectly familiar to my eye, now burst upon me with all the freshness of novelty. The luxuriant vegetation of southern climates is certainly one of the most striking things in the world; the quantity and variety of the fruits, the enormous size of the leaves, the rapidity of the growth of plants, all fill me with astonishment, especially when I consider the burning suns under which such fresh and magnificent foliage is produced. I have been on shore some four or five days, and the vessel will probably remain here at least a week longer. I shall make full use of my time in reconsidering all my impressions of the objects presented by this climate; for at Pondicherry I shall have more to do with man and man's works than with those of Nature, or God, if you will. I have done my best, then, to clear my mind of all previous views, and I have asked myself what signs of the hand of God I perceive in the things around me. That is the course you would have me pursue, I think; and I cannot help acknowledging that it does seem as if, in all this array of vegetable magnificence, by whatever immediate agents it may be brought into existence, there were an end and object worthy of a high and intelligent Being. It is true that we can perceive a certain hydraulic process by which these vast and spreading leaves, these enormous stems, these rich and juicy fruits, are raised up from the soil in a wonderfully short space of time, and that we can account for the whole, in short, upon mechanical principles; but still there remains the extraordinary and beautiful fact, that those mechanical principles are so nicely adjusted and applied as to produce such trees, such fruits, such leaves, in the very spot where a burning sun renders them most grateful, most necessary to the sentient beings placed in this part of the globe. I say it is an extraordinary fact, my dear abbé; and although I will not admit that it absolutely proves the existence of a God still it is a step gained towards your theory, which I willingly admit. It

will require my mind, however, to be satisfied of the universality of such indications of design before belief will go farther with me than to conclude that the combinations are accidental. Sometimes I am inclined to think we find them very convenient, sometimes very inconvenient.

However, I suspend my opinion, and in the mean time I cannot help expressing my admiration of what I behold. I was sitting in a garden yesterday, actually watching the progress of vegetation: I say watching it, for here one can absolutely perceive the details of the process. The leaves grow beneath my eyes; and the sap, rising through its thousands of channels, casts out millions of other tubes as it goes on, in endless variety, yet with infinite exactness. It is really worth while coming to the Isle of France to watch the operations of the vegetable world on a scale sufficiently large for the human eye to mark all that takes place with accuracy.

"All?" said the abbé, as he came to a break in the viscount's letter: "all? Who ever yet detected the thousandth part of what takes place even in that with which he is best acquainted? But let us see farther: here is more written at a latter date."

You will not think it strange (continued the viscount, in a part of his letter bearing date the day following that on which he had previously written)—you will not think it strange, my dear Arnoux, or childish, that I should write to you of a goat and her kid; but those animals are abundant here, and I have been watching two of them in the yard of the governor's house. It is a strange and a beautiful sight to see the tenderness and the patience of the mother, the sports and the rejoicing of the little one in the glories of its new existence. But what interested me more than all was, the strange contrivance of Nature to give to the young one food of the kind best calculated for its tender state. That the very fact of her producing a young offspring like herself should give her the means of supporting it with nourishment of a peculiar sort, perfectly adapted to it in all respects, is certainly startling in itself; and I say with you, that if these things are brought about by chance, it is a very strange one; and I do, I own, find it difficult to admit that even general laws, as some people have called them, or, what is more philosophical, inherent properties in the existing universe, should produce such nicely-adjusted results throughout such infinite varieties of being, without what is called design. It was not the poor goat alone that led me to this, but I got puzzled and confused; I found my former conclusions unsatisfactory, and insufficient to account for all that I saw; and I went away to the school of anatomy, where the chief professor is an old acquaintance of mine, a philosopher—that is to say, according to the common acceptation: I mean, a doubter of things that other men believe. He was very glad to see me again, and after the first salutations I asked him to show me what his pupils were about. Unfortunately, there was no dissecting going on, but he let me see some very beautiful models in wax of the eye, the tongue, the ear. I was astonished. What beautiful contrivances! what wonderful devices to give us all the senses that we possess! He explained every part as he went on; he told me, this is for this purpose, which he mentioned—that for another. The object of this is to produce such and such effects—the design of that is to arrive at such motions and at such sensations. "Look at the formation of the ribs!" he said, when he saw me somewhat surprised; "it seems very simple, and merely produces a sort of box to contain the lungs, the heart, and the superior viscera; but, in fact, it is a very curious and complicated contrivance, fitted with hinges and pliable cartilages, ropes and pulleys, for the purpose of expanding and contracting the space within, in the act of respiration; and, what is perhaps more wonderful than all, on the inferior side of each of these

ribs is a nicely-formed groove, which gives shaker to blood-vessels and nerves, and protects them from all injury."

"Design! purpose! object! contrivance!" I exclaimed; "then who is the fabricator of all this wonderful machinery?" "Oh, Nature," he answered; "she acts by certain laws and fixed principles." "Laws!" I cried; "what! without a lawgiver? Design, without a contriver? A great object arrived at by the most complicated means, without an intelligence to devise those means? Oh, no, no!" I returned, Arnoux, to my own chamber, with my whole thoughts in confusion; I caught a faint glimmering of a magnificent and beautiful scheme, in which it seemed that innumerable varieties of creatures, possessing that active and sensible existence which we call life, were formed by the will of a high and beneficent Intelligence, surrounded by objects calculated to give them happiness, protection, and support, and endowed with faculties infinitely graduated in extent for different classes and sorts of enjoyments, from the insect on the edge of a flower to the philosopher contemplating the heavens; and in the midst of this scheme I pictured to myself the great Intelligence that planned and executed it, looking at its vast perfection, and pronouncing that "it was very good." But then like a clap of thunder came upon me the thought of death, destruction, and decay, passions, crime, violence, and wrong; the beings that were made for joy and satisfaction rending and devouring one another, and all that wonderful creation blighted, blasted, and destroyed. Everything again fell into confusion; to my eyes the darkness seemed doubly dark; and I ask you, Arnoux, you who have guided me thus far, what is it that has done this? If a God made the beautiful world in all its perfections, what is it that has disfigured it?

"Sin! sin! sin!" cried the abbé, dropping the letter; "it is sin, my son!" and, casting himself on his knees before a crucifix, he prayed.

CHAPTER XLII.

As diseases and plagues affecting the body are generally diffused over the whole world at certain periods, each country suffering in its degree nearly at the same time, so moral pestilences and social maladies are equally epidemic, and we find at particular epochs almost all countries undergoing these inflictions alike. Indeed, a curious historical table might be drawn up, showing in parallel the vices and follies of each different period, with their modifications in various countries; the military madness of one time, the lawless fury of another; the bloody fever of civil wars appearing in its season over the whole world; the licentious scabies spreading abroad immediately after; the spasms of fanaticism; the atony of infidelity; the St. Vitus's dance of levity, and the *delirium tremens* of revolution, following each other and affecting the whole frame of society.

One of the great evils of the past age whereof we write

—and no civilized country was exempt from it—was the long and tedious delay to which almost all matters of business were subject, and more especially in the courts of law. It was the same in France as it was in England in all civil processes between individuals; and a curious difference appeared between the conduct of those civil processes and the trial of criminal offences. The latter were generally very rapidly concluded, except where the power of an arbitrary monarch interfered; the former were drawn out to months, years, lustres, sometimes centuries. One fact, however, may perhaps explain this difference. In criminal cases, little was to be got by lawyers but blood; in civil causes there was property, the revenues of which were transferable and transferred to the pockets of the gentry of the robe. This seems to be the only rational reason why, when two or three days is fully sufficient to determine to the satisfaction of all a man's right to live or die, the title to a field or to a thousand pounds can seldom be settled till the field is sold and the thousand pounds spent.

Slowly and tardily proceeded the cause of the claimants to the name of De Langy; and when Francis arrived in Paris, about seven months after the new heir had started up, he found that scarcely anything but forms had been gone through. The notary, the avoué, the advocate, assured him, however, that in two or three days more the cause would have a preliminary hearing before the courts; and part of his time each afternoon was spent in the halls of the parliament, the morning being given up to efforts for the purpose of obtaining the pardon of Jean Marais. He first applied to the Marquis de Langy, who promised to interest himself in the matter, and kept his word; but he also attempted to engage many of those whom he had known and associated with in the happy, peaceful days of early youth, which now seemed to have fled for ever, long before early youth itself was gone. But here he was taught one of those sad and bitter lessons which every man has sooner or later to learn in life, unless his position be a high and commanding one, which renders others subservient to it, and eagerly disposed to obey the behests of him who possesses it. When he spoke to the old in behalf of his servant, they listened and shrugged their shoulders, evidently showing they considered the application as a trouble and an annoyance. When he spoke to the young, they either treated it lightly and passed it by with a jest, or else assured him they were already engaged in pleading the cause of some one else with the minister or the king, or that they had no interest whatsoever, or that it was impossible to obtain such a favour. In fact, he met with difficulties, delay, insincerity, falsehood, indifference; but no

friendship, no zeal. And such is the world. Try it, reader, and you will find it so.

Day after day he returned home from courts of law and from polished circles, with that coldness of heart which the young and inexperienced feel on their first encounter with the hard realities of a selfish and corrupt society.

It was now, as the reader, if he have computed exactly, will know, the early spring of the year, before the sun has made any great progress, ere the days have lengthened or become warm. Francis had passed the evening in the place so happily and poetically named the *Salle de Pas Perdue*, or Hall of Lost Steps, where the litigants in causes tried before the parliament were accustomed to waste the weary hours of expectation ere their suits came on for hearing. He had found some little matter for interest in watching various persons as they paced up and down from one end of that long stone-paved chamber to the other; and many was the dark, many the sorrowful history which he thought he could trace upon those sad and careworn countenances.

Now went by a man advanced in life, with a pale face and shrunken features, and a haggard eye bent sightless upon the ground, while the threadbare coat, the ill-washed collar and ruffles, the black-hilted sword worn white at the edges of the sheath, spoke that sternest kind of poverty which fastens on the well-born and the well-bred, and sucks the heart's blood with the mouth of a vampire. Speechless, silent, mournful, he walked along, the ever-bitter presence of his own despair shutting out from his sight all other objects.

Then came a more angry kind of grief, one roused into rage by loss, and disappointment, and delay. With an irregular step, an eye generally cast down, but raised at the sound of every opening door, hands clenched and twitching in convulsive eagerness, and lips muttering the reproach and curse, he took the accustomed walk of the long-expectant suitor. Then came the widowed mother and her stripling son, looking in vain for their denied inheritance, with meek, sad countenances, and often tearful eyes; she in gloomy communion with her own painful thoughts, he grieving for himself and her, but striving to win her from her dark reveries by idle prattle, which only rendered them more bitter and more deep. Ever and anon, however, would pass by the fluttering advocate, with his conceited air of conscious importance; or the successful litigant, smiling and chattering, and taking snuff from his gold box; or the smooth avoué, mocking the victims of the law with soft soothing and insincere consolations; or the grim notary and greffier, the executioners of many a hard decree. It was a sad, an humbling, a despairing scene; and as the day drew towards a

close, the dropping sound of rain fast falling from the far-projecting eaves was heard between the intervals of steps, while the light grew dim and grey under the heavy clouds that covered the skies, rendering the aspect of the whole more melancholy.

"Is there any chance of its coming on to-day?" said Francis de Langy to his advocate, as he looked out for a minute.

"Oh, yes, yes," replied the man; "you must stay for another hour. I will send to you whenever it is called."

He knew at the very moment that there was not the slightest chance of the cause being heard for a month. What made him, then, thus play upon a client's feelings? Was it that the mind of man, when long accustomed to witness and to deal with agony, anxiety, and care, learns to take a cruel pleasure in protracting the pangs of expectation, exciting anticipations that are to be disappointed, hopes that are to be broken? No: he did it mechanically; it was part of the jargon of his craft: the latent motive, perhaps, being to make the client think that something was doing, that men were busy with his cause, that they were giving him his money's worth of time and attention; but even this he did not acknowledge to himself, and very likely would have made the same answer to one who asked him, What is it o'clock? There is a great difference between the two sorts of cruelty, the indifference to another's pain and the fondness for inflicting it; and the latter, thank heaven, is very much less common than the former.

On receiving this reply, Francis de Langy left the hall for a moment, and told the servant to take his horses home; for it was now one of those still, quiet falls of rain which promise to continue long, and he did not wish to keep either man or beast out under such a sky. He then returned and passed the weary time till the court rose, when he, in common with the rest, quitted that hall of disappointment. When he came out upon the steps the rain was still pouring on; and of the throng that issued forth along with him, some paused for a few minutes and looked about before they quitted the shelter even of that inhospitable roof; some went recklessly on, so occupied with their own feelings that they seemed scarcely conscious of the inclemency of the weather. Francis de Langy wrapped his roquelaure about him, drew the hilt of his sword up underneath it, and took his way onward towards the Hôtel de Langy. The streets were nearly deserted by all but one or two men, who, with large flaming torches in their hands, were running quickly about to light the dim and lack-lustre lanterns which were then common in the streets of Paris, and which, ere long, furnished to the most

ferocious people in the world gibbets for the murder of the noblest and best amongst them.

It was now nearly dark, and through the tall, narrow streets of the city, by the faint, smoky glare of those lanterns, Francis de Langy took his way onward, with a feeling of sickening disgust, towards the great capital of which he was a denizen, which he had sometimes experienced before, but never so strongly as at that moment. He had not gone a hundred yards before he heard a step behind him: it was coming somewhat quick, and he turned to see whose it was. A man was following, dressed in the ordinary garb of the lower class of the day; but, as there was nothing extraordinary in his appearance, except that he was a tall, powerful personage below the middle age, Francis de Langy pursued his course, taking no notice. The stranger, however, somewhat slackened his pace till they had passed through one or two streets, when suddenly his step became very much quicker, and coming up he said in a low tone, "I want to speak with you, sir."

The young gentleman turned and looked in his face, replying, "Well, I am ready to hear what you have to say."

"I cannot do it here, sir," answered the man; "if you will come with me to the house where I lodge, I will tell you what I want, and it is a matter of some importance."

"I am afraid," rejoined Francis de Langy, "you must tell it to me here or not at all. I am not a stranger in this city, sir, as perhaps you suppose, and am well aware that it is not expedient to follow people whom I do not know to their lodgings whenever they choose to ask me."

"You are quite right, sir," replied the stranger; "but I will soon give you reasons which will induce you to come with me without hesitation, for I know you well though you are not acquainted with me; and I am not ignorant that you are much less a stranger in Paris than I am."

"Indeed!" said Francis de Langy; "pray, whom do you suppose I am?"

"The Count de Langy," replied the man, "related to the Viscount de St. Medard, and not long ago you were staying in Auvergne, at the house of the unfortunate Count d'Artonne. Now, sir, I give you my word that what I have to say is of importance: will you come with me?"

Francis de Langy paused for a moment or two, and then replied, "Very well; go on—I will follow you."

It was not altogether, indeed, the mere fact of knowing his person which induced Francis de Langy to trust the stranger, for he was well aware that such information could be easily obtained; but there is a weakness in human nature which

requires much experience of the world and its various forms of roguery to remove, and which, indeed, when it is gone, leaves a void behind that we know not well how to fill up. We judge by face and manner long after we have learned to doubt mere words; and when we have acquired suspicion of all three, we find that we as often deceive ourselves as we were before deceived by others. Francis de Langy, though so young, had lately been taught not to trust with that wide confidence which is only the gift of inexperience; but the face of the man was frank and honest in expression, his manner earnest and sincere, and the youth had still a sufficient portion of happy credulity to rely upon them, coupled with the knowledge of his name and station which the stranger displayed.

Following, then, at a quick pace as the other strode on before him, the young gentleman suffered himself to be led through some of the poorer parts of Paris, behind the Quartier de l'Université, till at length his companion stopped at the door of a little auberge where several market carts were standing, showing that it was a house of call used by the country people who supply the French capital with the infinite variety of productions required for its daily consumption. The sight at once removed all idea of danger, and he made no difficulty when the stranger, pausing for a moment at the door, asked him to follow him into the house. A candle was procured, and up the narrow passage and creaking steps they went to a small chamber on the first floor, where his guide gave Francis de Langy the only unencumbered chair, and then, setting down the light upon a little table, seated himself upon the foot of the bed.

"Now," said the young gentleman, gazing in his companion's face, and trying to render more distinct, by an effort of memory, features which he fancied he recollected faintly—"now tell me what you want; but first tell me, have not I seen you before?"

"If so, it must have been accidentally," replied the man; "perhaps in casually passing in the streets or on the road. But what I have to say is simply this—do you not know where the Count d'Artonne is now to be found?"

"No, I do not," answered Francis de Langy. "You ask me a question which, as you are well aware, if I answered it in the affirmative, might bring me into danger. However, I can safely and truly say, I do not."

"That is unfortunate," said the stranger, in a tone of disappointment; "that is unfortunate: but perhaps you doubt me. If so, I can give you proofs that I am better acquainted with the affairs of the count than you imagine."

"Then why apply to me?" demanded Francis de Langy.

"I can only repeat that I do not know where he is, though I am certain that he is not in France."

"Can you transmit him a letter or a message?" asked the stranger, fixing his eyes upon the young gentleman earnestly.

"Not at present," replied Francis: "I cannot speak as to the future."

"Who can?" exclaimed the other; "but have you hope, expectation, probability, of being able to do so? The future is God's will, but we generally lay schemes for using it, as if it were our own."

"First give me some notion of who is the person that asks all these questions," replied Francis de Langy, for the other had spoken in somewhat of an impatient tone. "You require information on points, my friend, that, even when one has intelligence to afford, one does not discuss with absolute strangers."

"Who I am has nothing to do with the matter," rejoined the stranger; "but I will show you in a moment that I know all about the Count d'Artonne, and have been in his confidence even since his arrest. Do you know a person of the name of Latrobe?"

"Yes," answered Francis de Langy, "but that gives me no assurance; for I have heard that the police have arrested a man who was formerly my servant, for having forged a passport in that name to cover the escape of the Count d'Artonne. You might, therefore, very well be an agent of police, and in possession of that fact."

The man laughed as Francis spoke of an agent of police. "You are very cautious," he said, "for one so young. But I will come nearer to the point. Do you recollect meeting Monsieur Latrobe at an inn on the road between Riom and Paris, and arranging with him various signs and modes of communication?"

"I do," replied Francis de Langy, now convinced that the stranger must indeed have held some late communication with the count himself. "Speak! what is it you want? I see I can trust you."

"I want," answered the man, "to communicate to the Count d'Artonne some intelligence which it is most necessary for him to receive. Can you convey it to him?"

"I do not know," answered Francis de Langy: "at present I certainly have not the means; but I doubt not that at some future period—and that, most likely, ere long—he will give notice either to myself or Madame d'Artonne of where he is to be found."

"We must take our chance of it, then," said the man; "but recollect that it is very needful he should as speedily as possible have the letter which I have here written; for if

he do not return for his trial within six months, it will be too late for him to save either his estates or his name."

"Then the purport of this letter," asked Francis de Langy, putting his finger upon that which the man held in his hand, "is to induce the count to return and abide his trial?"

"Assuring him," replied the stranger, "that should he do so he will not be condemned."

"If I am to convey it to him," said the young gentleman, after a moment's thought, "I must have some means of informing him who the person is from whom I received it. I cannot take any part in inducing him to return, unless I can give him, at the same time, the means of judging whether such a course is likely to be dangerous or not. Have you explained yourself to him fully in the letter?"

"No," answered the stranger: "every packet, as you well know, is liable to be opened at the post-office; and of course I have not ventured to tell him anything, but have merely given him advice to return, and the assurance that he will not be condemned."

"Then the letter must rest upon the credit of him who sends it," said Francis de Langy. "And once more I repeat, before I undertake to forward it, you must give me some intimation of who and what you are. I must be able to tell him, in short, from whom I have received it."

"You may inform him," said the man, "you have received it from the person who accompanied him for four days and four nights on his journey away from Auvergne. That will be sufficient for him. Let him know, also, that I will meet him wherever he pleases when he returns, and give him the needful information by word of mouth."

"But how can he learn where to find you?" asked Francis de Langy.

"There may be a difficulty there, indeed," said the stranger, "for I too am a wanderer, and in peril every hour. But I will tell you: I will call to inquire for you at the Hôtel de Langy, at dusk, on the first of next month."

"I shall not be there," replied Francis. "At the Chateau of St. Medard you will find me almost at any time, but that is some leagues distant, near Senlis."

"I will come," answered the man; "it matters not to me how far distant it is."

Some further conversation ensued, which it is needless to detail; and at length Francis de Langy parted from his mysterious companion, with a conviction that he was sincere in his wish to serve the Count d'Artonne, although, at the beginning of their conversation, he had entertained very strong suspicions that he was neither more nor less than a disguised agent of police.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ON the day that Francis de Langy left the Chateau of St. Medard for the capital, and at about the same hour, a carriage rolled forth from the gates of Paris, the form and appearance of which indicated that its owner was a man of importance, if not of distinction; for there is a great deal of difference between these two terms. In the times we speak of, painting, gilding, ornamenting, in many ways afforded to the coach-builder the opportunity of marking the gradations in rank between those who were to tenant his rolling habitations, far better and more easily than the coach-maker of the present day can accomplish, when painting, gilding, and carving are utterly abolished, and the only distinction is in the taste and grace with which the whole fabric is put together.

The carriage we speak of was a tall, flat-sided machine, something like a magnified sedan-chair, supported by high springs, and having underneath it a double crane-necked perch. It was painted of a bright yellow in the panels, and black or dark green with a line of gilding round the top; while a number of bosses and other ornaments, likewise gilt, appeared in various parts of the vehicle. A wreath of flowers, designed by the hand of an artist who should have had nobler work to do, waved in the utmost perfection of art round each of the sides; and, although the whole had a staid and sober appearance when compared with many a vehicle of much inferior value which it passed, yet the eyes of the tasteful and discriminating could at once discern that it came from the hands of a superior workman, and must belong to some person of high quality or office.

Leaning back in the carriage was a gentleman, still habited in a nicely-cut suit of black, excessively neat in all his apparel, and precise, clean, and unruffled both in dress and demeanour. A portfolio of papers lay beside him on the seat, and from time to time he took one out, and read it with a calm, cold air, as if nothing on earth ever moved him from his ordinary insensibility.

About half-way to Senlis, after the road had been for some time almost utterly solitary, the sound of wheels caught his attention; and he had just time to raise himself gently and slowly, and give a glance out of the window, when another carriage, proceeding towards Paris, passed rapidly along the

road. A faint smile of satisfaction, which fled as soon as it appeared, crossed the gentleman's countenance as he caught a momentary glance of the face of Francis de Langy. He drew back instantly, however, into the corner of his own vehicle, and remained there talking to himself, his head bent a little forward and his eyes fixed upon one of the tassels of the window, evidently giving himself up to a reverie, from which he did not awake till the carriage approached Sculis, when he stopped the postilion, telling him to take the left-hand road, which would lead direct to the Chateau of St. Medard. He was much too great a man for any reply to be made, and the postilion obeyed at once, although he would fain have said that the road by Sculis was twice as good, that to the left being stony, sandy, and seldom travelled. To hear, however, was to obey; but it took many minutes to accomplish a journey which might have been performed in half the time. It did not want above two hours or two hours and a half, at the most, of nightfall, when the stranger reached the chateau; and on descending from his carriage to the door of the house, he asked deliberately for Monsieur le Comte de Langy, although he had passed him on the road and looked him in the face not very long before.

From this the unlearned reader might suppose that the visiter was a perfect stranger to our friend; but in that conclusion he would be altogether mistaken, as he will perceive when he is told that this calm, cool, and deliberate personage was no other than Monsieur de L——, whom he has formerly seen as intendant at Riom and Clermont. He next inquired for the Comtesse d'Artonne, on being informed that the young master of the chateau was absent; but Fortune, who, as the reader must have perceived if he have lived long in the world, is rather fond of cold and calculating rogues than otherwise, favoured the intendant's views and purposes at that moment most especially, by bringing across the open part of the park, which was visible from the spot at which he stood, the fair form of Julie d'Artonne, walking slowly along with a sad and thoughtful air, and her eyes bent upon the ground.

"Stay!" he added, ere the servant could reply. "I see Mademoiselle d'Artonne there; I will go and speak to her, and will return to have the honour of waiting upon Madame d'Artonne in a few minutes." Thus saying, with a step which was so easy that it seemed absolutely slow, though in fact it was very quick, he followed Julie as she proceeded up one of the great walks of the park, and in about three minutes was by her side.

Julie d'Artonne turned as soon as she heard a footfall, and beheld Monsieur de L—— with surprise, but with no great

satisfaction. As he made a movement to take her hand, however, she felt that she could not refuse to give it, on which he immediately bent, and raised it with an air of mingled respect and gallantry to his lips. He then asked after her health with an appearance of much interest, and after that of Madame d'Artonne, and concluded by saying that he was delighted at the opportunity of having a few minutes' conversation with her concerning her "excellent father."

Julie bowed her beautiful head in silence. There was a decided coldness in her manner which might have daunted any one less resolute than the person who walked by her side; but Monsieur de L — had the consciousness of power, and he estimated both his talents and his situation at their full value. He was aware, in short, that he was a man not easily to be frustrated, and he consequently proceeded as calmly and pleasantly as if Julie had displayed no chilliness or reserve.

"I dare say, Mademoiselle d'Artonne," he continued, "that it has seemed strange you have neither heard from nor seen me sooner, when I promised you distinctly at our last interview to do everything I could to forward what I knew must be your wishes."

"From what transpired, sir, regarding the sequestration after your departure," replied Julie, "my mother and myself believed that you must have taken an altered view of the case, and therefore the fact of our not seeing you or hearing from you did not at all surprise us."

"It is strange," replied the intendant, looking down with an air of thoughtful consideration—"it is very strange how persons unacquainted with the ordinary routine of business may be led to look upon the actions of their friends in a light completely false. With the matter of the sequestration, my dear young lady, I had no more to do than the pen in my inkhorn. The papers were brought before me merely as a matter of form, and I could no more refuse to sign them or make any change in them than I could give a royal warrant for your father's immediate pardon. They were amongst the last documents presented to me, and I quitted Auvergne immediately after they were despatched; but, if I had remained months or years, I could not have made the least alteration therein. I trust that you will believe me, and indeed my after-conduct ought to convince you; for since then I have not failed to use every means that was possible for man to employ to induce his majesty to supersede all proceedings whatsoever against your father. But my efforts as yet have been of no avail.—You doubt me," he continued, as Julie merely replied by bending her head; "but you do me

great wrong, Mademoiselle d'Artonne: you know not the deep, the intense interest that I take in your father and yourself. Luckily, it so happens," he added, "that I have about me the means of convincing you;" and taking out his pocket-book, he opened it and produced an official letter, which he handed to Mademoiselle d'Artonne, saying in an emphatic and feeling tone, "Look at that, my dear young lady, and do justice to one who has perilled his fortunes and the favour of the king to serve your family."

Julie took the paper, unfolded it, and read. "Sir," it began, "we have read your application on behalf of Alphonse Comte d'Artonne; and we have to reply, that we see no reason for changing our previously-expressed resolution, not to interfere *except under the circumstances which we before mentioned*. Signed, LOUIS;" and, lower down, the name of a minister.

Julie gave it back with glistening eyes. "I have indeed, sir, done you wrong," she said; "pray forgive me, and tell me what are the circumstances to which the king alludes."

The intendant paused, and seemed to hesitate for a moment, but then replied, "I am almost unwilling to state, mademoiselle, what they are, although upon them depends your father's safety."

"Then why—why should you hesitate to inform me?" asked Julie. "I fear there is something very terrible in them. But you need not be afraid; I can bear it whatever it may be."

"Oh, my dear young lady," answered Monsieur de L—, "under some circumstances how willingly would I explain! But it so happens that I am aware of many things which must render what I have to say most painful to you, as taxing your filial piety in a manner much too hard."

"There is nothing too hard, sir, I should think," replied Julie, "for a daughter to do for a father's safety. Pray, speak!"

"Well, then, mademoiselle," said the former intendant, "you must know I have had the opportunity and the happiness of serving his majesty, as he considers, well upon an occasion of importance, and he promised me that he would grant any favour I asked for any of my near relations. This was long ago, and the king doubtless thought that I would apply for some of the high posts or offices which from time to time become vacant in behalf of my brother, who, as you doubtless know, is a distinguished magistrate. I did not do so, however, for my brother was content; but as soon as I arrived at Paris from Auvergne, and had humbly thanked his majesty for the high functions to which he has called me, I demanded the grace and pardon of your father as the sole

request I had to make. The king started and looked displeased, saying that when he made the promise which I have mentioned he never expected that I would intercede for a criminal. I represented that I doubted not—indeed, that I felt sure—your father was not so criminal as he imagined, and that he must have killed the young Marquis de Bausse in some chance encounter. But his majesty replied, that he had sworn to regard such chance encounters as murders, and had pledged himself to act accordingly, to the Marquis de Langy, at the time of his eldest son's death. I was still pressing him upon the subject when one of those who were near suggested to the king to ask me if the Count d'Artonne was any way allied to me. I was obliged to acknowledge he was not, and his reply was then very simple, that he had only promised to grant me a favour in behalf of one of my relations, and therefore in rejecting my petition he did not violate his word."

The intendant paused, and Julie clasped her hands, exclaiming, "Then it is hopeless!"

"Nay, not hopeless, Mademoiselle d'Artonne," replied Monsieur de L——, in a low but earnest voice: "it depends upon yourself. You can at once restore your father to his country, to his home, to his honours, to his estates. You can sweep away the clouds that have come over your house, and give it back its sunshine.—Nay, hear me," he continued: "I know it must be most painful to you ——"

"What is it you mean, sir?" asked Julie; "how can I do this?" and as she spoke she raised her head and gazed in his face, unconscious of his views.

"By giving me your hand," said Monsieur de L——, "you would immediately take away from the king his only excuse for rejecting my petition in your father's behalf. Monsieur d'Artonne becomes at once my relation, and he is safe. I know it must be painful to you. I am well aware of all the circumstances. I know them all: that you have been taught to believe yourself engaged to a young gentleman I doubt not every way deserving you; that your father's consent has been given; and that you may think, perhaps," he added, watching the changing expression of her countenance, "that you do not love me, and consequently our union could not be happy. But, dear lady, you are very young; and woman's heart, formed for all excellence, generally follows her duty if there be not some very great fault in them to whom the care of it is entrusted. Every day we see women marrying men for whom they feel no attachment, and, if they are good and wise men, learning to love them most devotedly."

"But, sir," replied Julie, simply, "I love another."

A slight flush passed over the intendant's cheek and brow.

He knew the fact right well, but yet he did not like to hear it acknowledged. "True," he said; "but yet you are very young, Mademoiselle d'Artonne, and at your age a disappointment of this kind is soon recovered from, while the deep and devoted attention of a man who loves you most sincerely, the splendours of a court where you might take a place amongst the highest, and the consciousness of having made a noble sacrifice for a father's safety, would soon prove sufficient compensation; and you would learn to return the affection of one who had done his utmost to serve you and yours, and who would devote his life to make you happy."

Skilfully and carefully did he apply his words, reading his fair companion's face as a book, and adapting everything he said to that which he saw written there. He marked her brow contract slightly when he spoke of her soon forgetting her first love; he beheld a faint smile pass over her lip when he talked of the splendours of a court; but when he mentioned the high consolation of having saved her father, he saw a deep sadness come over the fair face of Julie d'Artonne, and he fancied that he had won the day. He was undeceived in a moment, however; for Julie replied the next instant, with a look of grief, but with a firmness which showed not the slightest remains of doubt or hesitation in her mind, "It cannot be. Whatever may be my inclination to sacrifice anything, everything, life itself, for my father, there are circumstances that render it impossible."

She was much agitated as she spoke, but not with the agitation of a girl called upon in very early life to accept or reject the hand of a man who loves her. All the feelings which such a situation naturally produces were with Julie d'Artonne swallowed up in the consideration of her father's situation; and therefore, though agitated, as I have said, though her lip quivered and her frame shook, yet it was not the timid agitation which more or less affects every woman in questions of love. Monsieur de L—— marked it all, and judged rightly of a good deal that he saw; but still there was something that he did not account for, with all his knowledge of the world, with all his keen perception of the human heart. To the man who does not understand high principles, who at best calls them convenient prejudices, there is always one leaf in the book of knowledge shut; there are motives that are unknown to him, there are actions which he cannot comprehend.

"May I ask what circumstances can be so imperative upon a daughter as a father's safety, as a father's deliverance, his restoration to honour?" inquired Monsieur de L——. "Do you object to explain to me what are the facts that render this impossible, Mademoiselle d'Artonne?"

"Oh, no!" she replied, "certainly not, to explain them to you generally. You have asked me, sir," she continued with a blush, "to become your wife; and I thank you most sincerely, both for the good opinion which must have prompted you to do me that honour, and for the kindness towards my father which I am sure has had the greatest share therein. But, sir, before my father himself left France, he united my hand to that of another, and by his commands and under his directions I have pledged myself by vows which bind me to Monsieur de Langy as irrevocably as if married to him."

"But, surely," said Monsieur de L——, "if Monsieur de Langy—or whatever his name may ultimately prove to be—loves you with that high and disinterested attachment which you deserve, and which is more commonly found in the young than the old, he will set you free from such vows when he knows all that is at stake."

"I will never ask him," answered Julie quickly; "and I don't think my father would ask him either, if he were to return to stand his trial to-morrow."

From the countenance of Monsieur de L—— no one could have divined the bitter sensations of his heart—the anger at the difficulties which opposed themselves to his views—the determination, only strengthened by resistance, to overcome all obstacles and work out his own will—the jealous rage and hatred that he felt towards Francis de Langy, and the resolution to crush and trample upon him if human cunning could be found strong enough to effect its object. All was calm, thoughtful, and grave externally; and he replied in a cool and deliberate tone, catching at the last words which Julie had spoken, "I take it for granted, of course, Mademoiselle d'Artonne, that your father will eventually return to stand his trial, otherwise the absolute loss of all his estates to himself and family must ensue. It is my own full conviction, from all I heard of the evidence while I was at Riom, and I know it was also the conviction of the president, Legrand, before whom the cause would have been brought, that your father would have been pronounced innocent, or at all events acquitted of the capital charge. It may be a comfort to him to be made aware of this, if you have any opportunity of communicating the fact to him; and as circumstances prevent you from taking the only means of ensuring his safety before his return, it is some satisfaction to know that the danger to him is not great, except by his persevering in staying away."

"But," said Julie, "he would of course be immediately arrested if he came back, and might be subjected to a long and painful imprisonment before his trial. I know he dreads it very much."

"Oh! there is no fear of that at all," answered the intendant with a smile; "you may assure him from me that there is not the slightest chance of his being arrested. Before he went and after he had fled, it was necessary to take every means of securing his person for trial; but when he has proved his intention of abiding the decision of a lawful court by returning openly, after his escape has been fully effected, no one will give any attention to his being in France till he surrenders himself at Riom. You may promise him from me that such will be the case. And now, my dear young lady," he continued, with a graceful bend of the head, "let me wish you every sort of happiness in your future life. To have contributed to that happiness, to have devoted all my thoughts to increase it, and in fact to have made your days pass like the spring sunshine, producing flowers before your footsteps wherever you went, would have been to me, had it been possible, the greatest earthly delight. Not being possible, as you say, I may grieve over my own disappointment, and but wish that you may be as blest with another as I would have endeavoured to make you. I will now go in for a moment and pay my respects to the Countess d'Artonne, but I will mention nothing to her in regard to the proposal I have ventured to make you, lest she should exert her influence and entreaties with you to make you secure your father's safety at the expense of your own peace of mind."

"Oh, sir," replied Julie, with tears in her eyes, "I feel that you are indeed generous and kind;" but he waved his hand gently, as if begging her to say no more, and, entering the chateau, paid a short visit to the Countess d'Artonne.

When seated in his own carriage, however, and proceeding towards Senlis, the intendant clenched his hand tight and let it fall heavily upon his knee.

"Curses upon her obstinate pride!" he cried; "but she shall be mine, and the estates of Artonne also, if power be worth anything in this world. I fear he is not in Holland, or I would drive him out. But I will punish this youth first. I shall find some means."

CHAPTER XLIV.

WHEN Francis de Langy returned from his interview with the stranger, he found his father crossing the vestibule with a letter in his hand.

"Ah, Francis!" he exclaimed, "this concerns you, I am sorry to say. It is the king's answer to my last application in favour of the Count d'Artonne. Read it: you will see how hopeless the case is."

Francis took it and read. To him the contents were new, but they would not be so to the reader, even if we were to repeat them here; for the letter was word for word the same which Monsieur de L——, now one of the king's ministers, had put into the hand of Julie d'Artonne not many days before.

"Pray, what are the circumstances," demanded Francis de Langy, "to which the king alludes, and under which he says he would interfere in favour of the count?"

"Simply," replied Monsieur de Langy, "if it can be shown, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the Marquis de Bausse was the person to attack Monsieur d'Artonne, and that the latter killed him in his own defence."

Francis de Langy shook his head, and returned the paper to his father without comment. He recollected the two conversations which he had had with the count after his arrest, and he felt convinced that the condition required by the king could not be complied with. The conviction was very painful to him, for he had still entertained the hope that the monarch would interfere, as had very frequently been the case; and retiring early to his chamber, he gave himself up to sad thoughts, as to what would be his own destiny and that of the family with which it had become so intimately linked during the last year. But Fortune had not yet exhausted all her malice upon him, and the very next day another blow was to be struck, which terribly aggravated all that had gone before.

He had spent the morning with the marchioness, but had not seen Monsieur de Langy, and was about to return once more to the courts of the law, in order to see whether any steps had been made in his cause. His foot was actually in the stirrup, when one of his servants, running out, informed

him that the marquis wished to see him in his cabinet; and turning back he immediately proceeded thither, hearing with some surprise, as he approached, the voices of several persons speaking. On entering, he beheld three gentlemen whom he knew to be distantly related to the house of Langy, and was not a little astonished to find that, instead of greeting him as usual, they only received him with a stiff and formal bow."

"They have prejudged the question against me," thought Francis de Langy; "already, it seems, I am no relation of theirs;" and he returned their greeting with a haughty bend of the head.

"Here is very sad news, Francis," said the marquis—"very sad news, indeed; yet I trust it may not be true. I hope that it is not so. Nevertheless, these gentlemen, by the proceedings that they think fit to take, compel me to make the matter known to you, while there may yet be some reasonable doubt."

"Pray let me hear these bad tidings," answered Francis de Langy. "I have been lately so accustomed to receive painful intelligence that I scarcely ever expect to hear anything else. What is the sorrow for the day, my dear father?"

"Why, sir," said one of the gentlemen, stepping abruptly forward, "I was informed yesterday by Monsieur de L——, that the 'Thetis' frigate, in which Monsieur de St. Medard was proceeding from the Isle of France to Pondicherry, has been lost in a storm three days after she set sail. Every soul on board has perished, and ——"

"Stay, stay, stay!" cried Francis de Langy, sinking into a chair, as pale as death, and covering his eyes with his hands; "stay! in pity let me learn to bear this ere you tell me more. Lost! every soul lost! Oh God! how strange and wonderful are thy decrees! Alas! alas! this is a terrible blow indeed!"

All were silent for a few minutes, seeing him more deeply and terribly affected than they had anticipated, and the Marquis de Langy rang for a glass of water, thinking that he would faint.

It was Francis de Langy himself who spoke first. "Now, sir," he said, after a few moments' thought, "what more? There was the word 'and' upon your lips when I stopped you, I fear somewhat rudely. May I know what you were about to say?"

"Why, sir," replied the relation, "these gentlemen and myself, being the collateral heirs of Monsieur le Vicomte de St. Medard, in default of Monsieur le Marquis here and his son, have been advised—as there is a doubt in regard to your own parentage, on whom Monsieur de St. Medard has

thought fit to settle his property—to put in our solemn protest against all the donations and bequests, whether by settlement or will, which he may have made to you, to take place after his death. This we do to guard our collateral rights in his landed property, and I hereby tender you our protest in due form.”

Francis de Langy took the paper which the other held towards him, and glanced his eye casually over it without gathering much of its meaning. “In fact,” he said, at length, forcing his mind from the more engrossing subject which was before it, in the loss of Monsieur de St. Medard—“in fact, sir, I am to conclude, for I really do not understand all these forms of law, that you wish to annul the act of adoption which my uncle entered into and the king confirmed?”

“It is upon the question, sir,” replied another of the relations, “whether Monsieur de St. Medard was your uncle or not, that the whole case turns. If you were really his nephew and he really your uncle, there can be no doubt the act of adoption stands; but if he performed it under a mistake regarding the relationship, we hold that it is null and void.”

“But I have understood,” said the young gentleman, “both from himself by letter and from his notary since he departed, that he took measures to confirm that adoption since the question of my birth arose.”

“We are advised, sir,” replied the last speaker, “that he did not perfect those papers.”

“But of course,” answered Francis de Langy, “they show his intention, which is also manifest by his letters to me.”

“We have nothing to do with letters, sir,” answered the relation, “nor with intentions: the law requires acts.”

“Oh, I understand you,” said Francis de Langy. “You do not doubt whether there was really an intention to adopt me as his child whether I was his nephew or not, but you propose to take advantage of any want of formality in the papers in order to frustrate what you know to have been his wishes?”

“No, no, sir; not exactly so,” replied one of the others; “but to guard our collateral rights, as I said before. Indeed, they are remote, and what we do is more for the benefit of Monsieur de Langy than ourselves.”

“Oh, I beg you would spare yourselves all trouble on my account,” exclaimed the marquis sarcastically. “It is my intention, if my poor uncle should unfortunately have left some of the papers informal or unfinished, to renounce on my own part all claim to his estates in favour of one whom I have always looked upon as my son, whatever may be the result of the suit now pending; and I am perfectly sure that

the young gentleman who claims to be my heir will gladly make the same renunciation."

"Ask him not, my dear father; ask him not," said Francis de Langy; "for most assuredly I would never accept aught at the hands of one who robs me of my name and my inheritance."

"Nay, nay, Francis," replied the marquis; "use not such harsh terms. How can you tell that he robs you of your inheritance? How can you tell that it is not really as has been asserted?"

"I feel it here," exclaimed Francis, laying his hand upon his heart; "I feel it here, my father. I might be the son of a peasant, but I cannot be the son of a knave."

"Well, gentlemen," said the collateral heir, who had taken such good care of his ultimate rights, and who had been the chief spokesman for his fellows, "having done all that is necessary in this business, we will take our departure. Whether Monsieur de Langy and his son have power to convey these estates to any other, to our detriment, may become a question hereafter, if it be tried."

"Make your mind easy, sir," replied Francis de Langy: "it shall never be tried on my account. I wish you good morning;" and sitting down, as the marquis saw his visitors to the door, he covered his eyes with his hands, murmuring, "And is he really gone?—he, on whom alone I had any dependence?"

On the marquis's return, however, he rose, and after a few words more he left the Hôtel de Langy, saying that he must go to the notary's and ascertain the facts. The old man received him kindly, but with an air of sympathy and grief, which showed that he had heard rumours at least of the loss of the "Thetis" and the death of Monsieur de St. Medard. Francis de Langy touched upon that part of the subject but briefly; for the foolish shame which almost all men have of giving vent to grief in tears prevented him from dwelling on that which he felt was likely to master him. In answer to his question regarding his adoption by Monsieur de St. Medard, the notary replied, "Why, I am afraid it would bear a suit. The last paper could not be prepared in time, and therefore is unsigned; but the others clearly prove the intention of the viscount. However, I will consult an advocate about it."

"Do not take the pains," answered Francis de Langy: "I am sick of the law, and I do believe that, according to the divine injunction, which we should follow from better motives than I fear I do, if a man sued me for my cloak, I would give him my coat also;" and thus saying he left him.

With a heavy heart and a thoughtful brow Francis took his

way back to the Hôtel de Langy. The prospect before him was cheerless enough, it must be acknowledged. If the cause in which he was engaged regarding the succession of the house of De Langy should be decided against him, he lost also the estates of St. Medard; he lost even the allowance which he had received from the viscount; he lost nearly everything, in short: for, although the notary had assured him that Monsieur de St. Medard's personal property, his money, his goods, his chattels, being left by will, went to him beyond all manner of doubt, yet the sum was so small comparatively that the income to be derived from it could not amount to more than four or five thousand livres, or about a couple of hundred pounds in English money. Had it been for himself alone that he was anxious, he would scarcely have cared for the loss of fortune: the buoyancy of youthful hope, still strong in his bosom, would have borne his heart high above the waves of adversity. He felt within himself powers and resources of many kinds; he feared not, he cared not, for his individual prospects; but when he thought of Julie d'Artonne his heart sank. He pictured her to himself struggling with poverty, bowed down by petty cares, removed from the station in which she was born, deprived of the comforts and luxuries to which she had been accustomed, and instead of sharing what he had hoped to offer her—honour, prosperity, and high rank—living as the wife of a poor and nameless man, exposed to the thousand ills which must follow such a station.

Such were his thoughts when he re-entered the Hôtel de Langy and proceeded to his father's cabinet, knocking before he entered. The marquis's cheek was somewhat flushed, and he was evidently discomposed.

"I have written this paper, Francis," he said, "to give you full assurance that during my life you will never be disturbed in possession of the estates of St. Medard. I wished," he added, "that another person should join me in the act, and have been to him, never doubting that he would do so readily. He declines, however, and perhaps we ought not to blame him."

"I blame him not at all, my dear father," answered Francis; "but perchance he may think himself heir of Langy too soon."

He hesitated whether he should take the paper or not, for he was determined not to avail himself of it under any circumstances; but, to avoid all discussion with the marquis on the subject, and not to seem ungrateful, he after a moment's pause received it without comment, determined to destroy it as soon as he reached his own apartment.

"Should this cause be decided against me, he continued,

with a faint smile, remembering how necessary it was that the Count d'Artonne should know where to communicate with him and the countess—"should this cause be decided against me, as perhaps it may, I will beg to be your tenant in the Chateau of St. Medard, to which I shall return this evening."

"You are jesting, Francis," said the marquis, reproachfully: "the chateau is your own, during my life at least, and the estates also. I think, perhaps, it may be better for you to go back as you propose, for this day's news has been a great shock to you, and a little repose and quiet must be beneficial. From all I hear, it is impossible that the cause can be decided for weeks, or even months to come."

"Then the lawyers have deceived me shamefully," replied Francis de Langy.

"They always do," answered his father, and what he said was true, then at least.

Not long after this conversation, Francis de Langy bade adieu to the Hôtel de Langy, and returned with a sad heart to his own abode. It was late ere he arrived; night had long fallen; and as he was not expected, the saloon was vacant, the little party at the chateau having broken up a few minutes before. While the old butler ran to bring lights, the young gentleman stood before the wide chimney, and gazed upon the crackling wood that still burnt upon the hearth, casting a fitful glare around the room. The vacant chamber seemed to him like the end of life, when the lights of existence and the bright faces that cheered it have been taken away, and nothing is left but the embers to cast faint and flickering gleams upon the things around before they too go out, and all is cold and dark. His voice had been heard, however, and the sound of the carriage-wheels; and before the old man returned with lights, Julie had come down to welcome him. His arms were once more round that bright and beautiful form, and the very touch of her hand seemed to revive hope and consolation in his bosom. The moment after, Madame d'Artonne joined him, and both eagerly asked, "What news?"

"It seems very ungrateful, for the joy of seeing you both again," replied Francis de Langy, in a sad tone; "but I wish I had been an hour later, or that you had gone to bed an hour before."

"Then your tidings are bad, of course," said Madame d'Artonne. "Your cause is lost, my poor Francis. But do not be cast down; Julie can be very happy, and make you happy too, without the name of De Langy."

"It is worse than that," answered the young man. "I have made up my mind to lose my rights and be deprived of

my inheritance; but I have had a greater shock. Monsieur de St. Medard is, I fear, lost in the 'Thetis,' between Port Louis and Pondicherry."

Madame d'Artonne clasped her hands and gazed in his face with horror.

"Good God!" she cried, "is it possible?"

"Let me tell all at once," continued Francis de Langy, "that there may be nothing painful left behind for to-morrow. It seems that the papers which were necessary to confirm me in the possession of this property, in case another should be pronounced the son of the Marquis de Langy, were not altogether completed before my uncle went away, and that consequently the estates of St. Medard will be lost to me if this cause be not gained. There is some small sum in money and effects, which I must possess—a pittance, Julie, affording an income less than that of many a wealthy farmer. Can I ask you to share such a fate?"

"I require no asking, Francis," replied Julie, casting her arms round him. "I am yours; and if misfortune gives me but the opportunity of showing you how deeply, how devotedly I am yours, I shall regret it only on your account, and not on my own, for the delight of so doing is more than sufficient compensation for any change of circumstances that may befall me. Do you think I care for wealth, Francis, if you love me still?" and her tears fell upon his cheek.

Madame d'Artonne looked on with a sad smile. "Should misfortune still pursue us, my children," she said, "and Francis lose this suit, on which so much depends, we will go to join my husband in another land. But you have not told Francis, Julie, that you have seen Monsieur de L——, and that he advises your father's return."

"He is an artful villain!" exclaimed Francis de Langy; "and if he has given that advice, it is, in my eyes, the strongest motive for warning Monsieur d'Artonne against such a course."

"Indeed, Francis," said Julie, "I believe you do him wrong. I have much to tell you regarding his conduct when he was here, which, I think, will alter your opinion of him. In the mean time, however, my mother has written to my father, informing him exactly of what the minister said."

"Written to him!" exclaimed Francis de Langy; "then you must have heard from him?"

"Yes," answered the countess, "a few words coming by the ordinary post told me to communicate with the Chevalier de Riom, at a town called Dover, on the English coast. It was in my husband's hand, and therefore I conclude that Riom is the name he has taken."

"I must write to him also," replied Francis de Langy;

"but in the mean time tell me, Julie, what did this intendant say?"

"Nay, nay, you shall hear that to-morrow," answered Julie, "for you want rest, Francis. I will tell you all, do not fear."

"I am sure you will," rejoined Francis de Langy; "but as for rest, dear Julie, I am afraid I shall not get much of that. However, I had better communicate my sad news to Monsieur Arnoux, if he be not asleep. I have often heard him say he would rather receive painful tidings in the evening than in the morning, that he may have the whole night to ponder upon them undisturbed, and to pray to God for comfort and support. I wonder if he be asleep."

"I should think not," replied Julie, "for he went only a few minutes before we did;" and Francis de Langy, accompanying his fair companion up-stairs, proceeded to the chamber of the abbé.

CHAPTER XLV.

WE must lead the reader back to Bicêtre, where we left one of our important personages confined, previously to being sent to the galleys, as it used to be called in former days, or to the *bagne*, as it was named at the time we speak of—in other words, to hard labour in some public dockyard. Jean Marais had been immediately taken to that part of the prison called La Force, where it was usual to keep prisoners condemned to the galleys before they were despatched upon their ultimate destination. The liberty to commit every sort of crime was in those days granted to the prisoners in Bicêtre; and, as a famous personage has justly observed, in the fraternity of rogues the ordinary order of estimation is reversed, and the greater the villain the more distinguished member is he of that society. Poor Jean Marais, with all his wit and *savoir faire*, would have been but wretchedly off in Bicêtre had it not been for the lessons of *argot* which he had received along the road; for the slightest approach to honesty was an offence against the community of which he was now a member, and ignorance of the practice of rogues and vagabonds was sure to subject a convict to pillage and ill-treatment. He saw some of his companions from the northern provinces stripped before his eyes of almost everything they possessed, and left nearly naked in the midst of

the court; and it was only the fact of being able to speak the cant tongue, joined to the praises which his master of languages bestowed upon him, that saved him from the same fate. He showed, too, at the canteen, and at the *savatte*, that he had a strong head and a strong arm; but, nevertheless, as may well be supposed, the contamination of example, the witnessing of nothing but crime and roguery, the hearing of nothing but blasphemy, falsehood, and vice, from morning till night, were not likely greatly to improve the morals of Jean Marais, had he been long confined to the atmosphere of Bicêtre.

Such was not the case; and, there not having been time for strong natural sense to be overpowered by evil precept and example, he was rather disgusted by all he beheld than induced to imitate it, and he more than once asked himself, "Is it possible that I shall become like one of these?" He determined, however, if ever he were free again, not to look upon getting into Bicêtre as so light a thing, but to take especial care not to put himself in the same predicament, either for his own gratification or that of others.

It luckily so happened, that at the end of three days a detachment of convicts, called a chain, was sent off for the port of L'Orient, and it was the fate of Jean Marais to be amongst the rest; for which, to say the truth, he felt very thankful when the news was first communicated to him. But when he saw all the horrible preparations for securing the prisoners on the road, which were performed upon a gang taking its departure the day before—the riveting of them by the neck to a long chain passed through the midst of the detachment, the cutting of their hair close, the searching them for any money they might have on their persons, the brutality of the officers and the guards, and the horrible language and conduct of the wretches thus tied together towards any one of their own unfortunate fraternity who expressed the slightest distress, grief, or apprehension—soon made him feel inclined to bear even the horrors of Bicêtre rather than undergo the dreadful degradation which was there presented to his eyes.

We shall not dwell upon what were his own sensations when it became his turn to go through the same process. Suffice it that, on the preceding evening, the companion of his former voyage came up to him and held out a handful of two-sous pieces, asking if he would buy them. Jean Marais did not comprehend what he meant, but the man laughed, exclaiming, "Go along! thou art a blockhead; I know you have got some *jonc* in your *filoché*. Don't you know, if you go to-morrow, as they say you will, they make you give up everything except six balls? The captain will take care of

it on the journey, and pay it to you as you want it; but you'll not get much of it if you are such a *gonze* as to let him have it. Don't you see that these bits of copper open and shut? * so you can put into them as many louis-d'ors as you like. They won't take sous from you, you know; but you must keep your louis-d'ors quite quiet. You will have to pay a franc a-piece for these, but it's worth your while to save your gold."

Jean Marais entered fully into the excellence of the scheme, and bought all the hollow two-sous pieces he could get, of which precaution he found the great utility at an after period. The next morning, the chain of convicts to which he was attached set out, placed in a large wagon, back to back, with a little straw to cover their feet, but nothing whatever to shelter them from the inclemency of the weather. There was a sharp wind blowing, the rain came down in torrents, the captain of the chain seemed doubly cross and irritable with the badness of the day, and the guards, or Argousins, were disposed to keep themselves warm by exercising the sticks with which they were armed upon the backs of several of the unhappy convicts. Everything that tyranny and brutality could do to aggravate misery was not wanting, and a dark, revengeful feeling sprang up even in the heart of Jean Marais, which might have induced him, had he been able to effect such a purpose, to dash out the brains of some of the guards against the wall of the outhouse in which they slept on the third night after their departure from Paris. Force repressed it, however; and on the following day a touch of kindness in a human being like himself awoke better thoughts within him. The chain was just stopping for the miserable supper afforded to the convicts, when a travelling capuchin came up to the door of the wretched little inn, and asked for a glass of water. The host gave it him, and the eye of Jean Marais rested with eager envy upon the old man as he drank the cool clear beverage which Nature has provided for her children, and for which, when real thirst presses upon us, the taste is sure to return. The capuchin marked his eager glance and somewhat bloodshot eyes; and coming nearer to him he said, "Art thou thirsty, my son?"

"Dreadfully," replied Jean Marais.

The old man went back to the door, and taking out three sous from his wallet, he bade the people of the house bring some wine and water, which when it came he carried with

* *Brider* and *debrider* were the words used by the worthy convict; but, as the reader has probably had enough of the language of French thieves to give him some idea of the richness of that tongue, we shall beg leave to translate the rest.

his own hand to the convict. Jean Marais blessed him from his heart, and marked well that the good friar had drunk nothing but the pure element himself, though he mingled wine with that which he gave to him. The capuchin had not done so without thought, for he judged from the countenance of the prisoner that he was ill, and that plain water might do him harm. Nor was he mistaken; for by the time that the gang arrived at L'Orient poor Jean Marais could not stand, and his first lodging at the bagne was in the hospital.

There, freed from his chain, and treated with much kindness by some of the good Sisters of Charity who attended the sick convicts, he soon began to recover from the fever which bad treatment, and perhaps, still more, depressing passions, had occasioned. He was in no haste, however, to show himself convalescent; and his first thought, as he felt the blood flowing more calmly through his veins, was how to regain his liberty. If death itself were to be the consequence, he resolved to attempt an escape; and, fortunately for him, the circumstance of having been brought in sick, and placed at once in the hospital, greatly favoured his purpose. His own clothes had been left with him, his hair and beard had grown, the guardians of the gates had taken no particular note of his appearance, and everything that he saw convinced him that no such opportunity of evasion would ever again present itself. He continued, therefore, to affect great feebleness; showed an unwillingness even to move from his bed when the physician of the hospital judged that it would be better for him to do so; and when he had risen, he merely tottered to the window and sat himself down, looking out with a vacant air.

From the spot where he had placed himself he could see the miserable courts and quays, to which the convicts were confined for their labour; and many a group he perceived at their different employments, manacled together by the leg two and two, and dressed in red cassocks, with a green pointed cap having a tin plate upon the front of it. Various bands were at the moment going out to their different destinations in the port, and all were noisy—either giving vent to their passions in curses, execrations, and the most horrible and revolting blasphemies, or drowning their feelings in loud and exaggerated merriment. On the other side, he saw the gate of the bagne, which stood open during the day, with numbers of persons passing in and out, and apparently no great vigilance maintained; for, in truth, the officers who had the management of those horrible receptacles of vice and infamy trusted entirely to the keen eyes of the supervisors of the different gangs, and to the peculiar dress and chains of the

convicts, which were examined every day. Their close-cut hair, too, which gave them in general an air almost idiotical, was another distinguishing mark upon which they greatly relied; and the conclusion which Jean Marais drew from his examination during that morning was, that if, unperceived, he could but get out of the place where he then was, he should have no difficulty in making his way into the town. But he had remarked that the gate of the hospital was strictly guarded; and the number of persons, especially Sisters of Charity, passing continually to and fro, was likely to prevent him from even quitting the ward unnoticed. Money, however, he knew would do a great deal, especially as it was the habit in those days to employ convicts who had endured a certain portion of their punishment in attending upon the sick in the hospitals.

Taking out, therefore, unobserved, some of the louis which he had concealed in his copper pieces, he watched till one of the attendants passed by, whom he had fixed upon as a personage likely to listen to any sort of seduction by which money was to be gained, and beckoning him to the window where he sat, he soon found that he had not mistaken his man.

The worthy ward-keeper grinned at the sight of the gold, but shook his head with a sigh, saying, "I don't see how it's to be done. If you were strong enough one might manage the thing easily, for the wall of the garden next the town is not eight feet high, and you might be over in no time; but if you wait till you're well enough they will mark you so that you can soon be caught again. To-morrow I know they will cut your hair and give you the hospital dress."

"I can manage very well to-night," whispered Jean Marais; "I am stronger than I seem. If you will open the door of the ward for me when all these people are asleep, and take me to the wall next to the town, I will get over, and you shall have these three louis for your pains."

"Oh! that will be done in no time," answered the man, "But remember, you'll have to run long and far before you get out of the way of *la curieuse*—I mean, the police."

"Never fear, never fear!" replied Jean Marais; "I will do it. The air on the other side of the wall will soon give me strength, but I must be as weak as ever while I am here."

"Ay, do, do!" said the man. "I will come to-night, but now I must go away."

As he spoke, one of the Sisters of Charity approached, and asked what the patient was saying to him.

"I think he is foolish," replied the attendant; "he wants to go and see his parents."

"Ay, poor fellow! I dare say he does," answered the Sister

of Charity. "God grant he has not broken their hearts!" and she went on to the bed of another.

Affecting still to be very weak, Jean Marais soon retired to his pallet; and his confederate, under the pretence of strengthening him after the fever, procured some wine for him, of a far better quality than was allowed in the hospital. A little after midnight he came back with a lantern, by the light of which Jean shaved his long rough beard, dressed himself in the clothes which he had brought with him, and, descending the stairs, with the incorruptible guardian of the sick convicts, without any difficulty made his way into the court, and thence to what was called the garden. The fresh air turned him giddy, it is true, and he felt himself weaker than he had supposed; but a little more wine, which the man had got with him in a gourd, refreshed him, and he speedily reached the other side of the garden.

The wall proved somewhat higher than he had expected; but his new-found friend, on receiving the money which had been promised him, proffered his back as a temporary ladder, and by this aid Jean Marais soon reached the top, and easily let himself down into the street beyond. He was now in the midst of a town of which he knew nothing, having several hours of darkness before him, but with the certainty of his flight being discovered early on the following morning, and instant pursuit taking place. Fortune, however, favoured him; for scarcely had he gone down two streets when he met a party of young men, roaring drunk, proceeding from one house of revelry to another, and ready to enter into companionship with anybody who chose to join them. In a minute Jean Marais was one of them; and, wandering on till they came near the gates, they all entered a cabaret, much frequented by the soldiers of the guard, some of whom were drinking there at the moment.

Our good friend Jean took especial care to doff his hat as he entered the public room, seeing that the brim had been cut off before he left Bicêtre, as one of the distinguishing marks of a convict attached to the chain; and casting it down in a corner with the rest, it passed without notice. Some warm wine and cards were soon procured; and joining the party of soldiers, a night of revelry commenced, which did not go by without all those little incidents which usually attend such orgies. Laughter, songs, disputes, quarrels, succeeded each other rapidly; but as Jean was sober and the rest were drunk, he contrived with great skill not only to avoid any contest himself, but to keep his new companions tolerably peaceable, and make friends of the soldiers, by whose means he hoped to pass the gates unquestioned. One or two of the party whom he had first met were soon stretched

upon the benches, their senses completely overpowered by wine; and when daylight came in and the soldiers started up to depart, Jean Marais found means to furnish himself with a hat in a more perfect condition than his own. He was not, however, by nature dishonest, although, as the reader must have perceived, he was by no means without his peccadilloes, and was not so much troubled with scruples as might have been desirable. But every man not totally abandoned has some odd notions of honour peculiar to himself; and in taking up the hat which suited him, Jean Marais said to himself, "Hang it! I won't steal the thing," dropping at the same time a Spanish crown, which he had just received in change, into the brimless beaver which he left behind.

"Where go you, comrade?" asked one of the soldiers, whom he had made particularly his friend by taking his part in a dispute about the cards.

"I must get away as fast as I can," replied Jean Marais; and he named a village which he knew lay at some distance from L'Orient as the place of his residence. "My master, if he finds I have been out all night, will rate me soundly; but he's such a sluggard that I shall be at home before he is up. Are the gates open yet, I wonder?"

"They ought to be," said the soldier. "Come along, come along; if they are not, we will have them opened for you, and when you come in again ask for me at the gate, and we'll have another bout."

"Ay, that I will," replied Jean Marais; and under the kind auspices of his military friend he was soon beyond the walls of the town, and wandering at liberty in the country.

As the reader doubtless knows, there is not in the neighbourhood of L'Orient any great shelter for a fugitive. A rich and cultivated but flat country, without much wood, extends along the borders of the sea; and though Jean had soon quitted the high-road and plunged amongst the villages and hamlets which lie between Hennebon and the port he had just left, he found nothing to encourage him to stop till he had gone between three and four leagues, when, traversing a wide piece of sandy heath, he came to some woody ground covered with low stunted trees, neither very closely planted nor thick in the branches, but which dazzled and confused the eye and afforded him such shelter as he sought. He was very much fatigued, however; and not choosing the ground for a bed, less out of consideration for his health than with a view to security against pursuit, he climbed up into a low oak, and after some difficulty found a place amongst the branches where he could rest without danger of falling. Sleep soon overpowered him; and he must have remained in the same situation for some hours; for the sun had got round into the

west, and was not very far from the horizon, when he awoke with a start, and had well-nigh tumbled down to the foot of the tree. The sound of human voices showed him at once what had roused him, and looking a little to the right, he saw two archers of the *maréchaussée* riding slowly along at the distance of some twenty yards.

From their conversation, part of which he heard, he gathered that they were returning from a fruitless search for some prisoner, and very naturally concluded, though perhaps wrongly, that he himself had been the object of their perquisitions. As soon as they were out of sight, he descended from the tree and took his way onward, walking as fast as he could for the next two hours, but avoiding all villages, till the setting sun warned him that it was time to seek some place of shelter. He flattered himself that he was now at least seven leagues from L'Orient, and consequently believed that he might venture in safety into the first place of public entertainment he met with. A little hamlet on a hill soon caught his eye, and to it he was directing his steps, with the glorious light of a spring sunset shining in the sky, when the small country road he was following crossed another; and he perceived by a finger-post, that in his previous anxiety to avoid inhabited places he had lost the right direction, and was taking his way back direct towards L'Orient.

At the same moment, as misfortune would have it, the two archers whom he had seen an hour or two before appeared coming along the road behind him; but Jean Marais was a person of great presence of mind, as the reader has already perceived, and without appearing to hesitate he trudged on till the men overtook him.

"Where are you going, good youth?" inquired one of the archers.

"To L'Orient, sir," replied Jean Marais, without the slightest embarrassment. "I am afraid I shall not get there till the gates are shut." "I wish I had your horse, monsieur."

"Ay, I dare say you do," rejoined the archer; "but you can get one at Grand Herpont, there, before you, if you've got the crown-pieces in your pocket to pay for it."

Jean shook his head with a laugh, and the man continued, "How far have you come to-day?"

"From Beaud," replied Jean Marais, who was a tolerably good topographer.

"That's a long walk," said the other. "Did you see a fellow with a shaved head as you passed along?"

"What! a convict?" asked Jean Marais, looking straight in the man's face. "Why, some of your own people passed me with one an hour ago, going back to L'Orient. They

came from the side of Landenan, and must have caught him somewhere in the neighbourhood of Hennebon."

"Ah! then we have had our ride for our pains," said the other man. "Come along, Jacques—we must quicken our pace;" and, bidding Jean Marais adieu, they rode on.

Well satisfied to be freed from their company, Jean proceeded to the village, which was not above a hundred yards distant, and there refreshed himself with a hearty supper, after which he once more betook himself to the road, and walked on for three or four hours, till fatigue compelled him to take shelter again in a wood, where he passed the remainder of the night very comfortably. By sunrise he was again on foot, and before the close of that day was safely ensconced in a little inn at Pontivy, amongst a number of small traders who came to buy and sell at the spring fair of that place, which commenced on the following morning. Under cover of the bustle and excitement of the period, Jean went out into the fair, and after wandering about for some time succeeded in purchasing for himself the coat, breeches, gaiters, and broad-brimmed hat of a Breton peasant, and for the sum of three louis added thereto one of the excellent small horses of that country. A bridle and saddle left him only five louis remaining; but he had purchased security for the time being, at least, and calculated that the sum he still possessed would be sufficient to bring him into the neighbourhood of those who would take care he should not long want a fresh supply.

CHAPTER XLVI.

It was a sweet day of spring, when the world was all rejoicing and the sky without a cloud. The air was soft and balmy, the glad birds were singing in every bush, the insect world was fluttering abroad, and the voice of hope was in all things, as Nature cast off the grave-like trammels of the winter and burst into new life. The same sensations were in the hearts of Francis de Langy and Julie d'Artonne, as they walked on side by side, just as the broad evening sun was sinking slowly behind the trees of the park; and the tongue of the undoubted enchanter who sings us into sweet dreams, from the cradle to the grave, spoke to them also the never-failing tale of happier days to come. Oh! the bright, inexhaustible treasures in the storehouses of young Imagination! Thence, with but little search, the goddess can always draw forth some splendid veil, jewelled and rich, and decked with infinite stars, to cast over the grim features of the future, frown they never so sternly.

Thus, though all the prospect before them was as dark as ever it had been, though not one step had been taken towards happier fate or more favourable circumstances, vague expectations of some change for the better accompanied the lovers forth upon their evening walk, and assumed, as they proceeded, more distinct and tangible shapes.

They first called up fears and dreads but for the purpose of banishing them.

"I almost regret," said Francis de Langy, "both that I sent the letter with which the stranger in Paris entrusted me, and that your mother, Julie, told Monsieur d'Artonne the expectations which that false and treacherous intendant held out. I put faith in neither the one nor the other, and I trust the count will not attend to them. It is now a fortnight since I wrote, Julie, is it not? and surely, if Monsieur d'Artonne had any intention of returning, we should have heard from him by this time."

"It is more than a fortnight, Francis," replied Julie; "but you seem as anxious now to quit France as you were formerly to stay here."

"Because," answered Francis de Langy, "I trust we may find happiness beyond the sea, Julie. The tie of birth is all mine: now remains between me and my country, at least if

this suit takes the turn that it seems likely to do. In a new land new prospects will spring up, and wherever you are shall be a native land to me. Your mother, too, is eager to go, Julie; but I do hope that before we set out this dear hand may be mine: indeed, it is but right and necessary that I should have such a title to protect you."

"But would there not be difficulties?" asked Julie. "We are both so young, Francis."

"Oh, no!" replied her lover, with impetuous eagerness; "there will be no difficulties. Your relations, dear Julie, will not interfere, if your father and mother consent; for, truly, at the very first breath of adversity they seem to have cast you off and forgotten their kindred; and mine, deprived of wealth and station, will not trouble me with much opposition. Indeed, dear one, you must be my own before we go."

Julie made no reply, but gazed on in silent thought. Whether that thought was sweet or bitter, let the reader learned in woman's heart decide. She said him not nay, however; and that was enough to fill the bosom of Francis de Langy with happy visions.

Thus they pursued their way for a short time, when suddenly the cracking of a postilion's whip—an unpoetic and unromantic sound—caused them to stop and look along the road, down which they perceived, coming at a quick pace, a gentleman with a postilion, riding what was called *à franc étrier*, a custom now reserved almost entirely for couriers, but then practised by many persons encumbered with but little baggage and anxious to go fast.

"It is my father!" cried Julie, as soon as she saw him, and her countenance turned as pale as death; for the happy dream which hope had conjured up before her of love's home in another land vanished away at the sight, and there was nothing in its place but fear. She hastened, however, with her lover to meet the count, whose features and person soon became distinct, though, when her heart first told her it was he, there was nothing to be seen which could distinguish him from any other traveller. In a few minutes she was in her father's arms; but, remounting his horse, he rode on before them to the chateau, and when they arrived they found him with the Countess d'Artonne.

Tears were upon the cheeks of both husband and wife; but the count spoke hopefully, nay, cheerfully. The assurances of the intendant, he told them, had not been altogether satisfactory to him, especially as Madame d'Artonne herself had conveyed the message with some expressions of doubt; but those assurances, coupled with the letter which Francis de Langy had forwarded, from one who had proved himself a sincere friend, induced him to believe that some

circumstances must have transpired in the examinations at Riom to give a more favourable aspect to the case than when he had made his escape. He did not mention the name of the person by whom the letter had been sent; but Francis perceived, and was sorry to perceive, from some further conversation with the count, that he had suffered his judgment to be biassed by the tediousness of a solitary life in a foreign land, and by his anxious desire to see his native country again. At all events, it was an important step that he had taken: he had made his choice between the endurance of small but constant evils and one great peril, which, once passed through, could never return; and both Francis and the count's wife and child could not but look forward to the result with anxiety and dread. A fresh cloud, dark, stormy, and threatening, had come over that sky from which the light breeze of hope had so lately been wafting the lesser vapours, which had only shut out a part of the sunshine of life. Thus, though they were all rejoiced to see the fugitive once more, a tinge of sadness was over their prospects, and in every interval of conversation gloom fell on the countenances of all.

It was late when they parted to retire to rest, and all discussion regarding further proceedings was reserved till the next morning. The count, indeed, seemed to have made up his mind to everything that was to be done, to have considered the matter well, to have looked the future in the face, and, consequently, was more calm and cheerful than any of those who surrounded him. The only thing which seemed much to trouble his tranquillity was the fate of poor Jean Marais, and he repeated more than once, "If it be possible. I must not let him suffer from his devoted gratitude to me."

Whatever were the plans he proposed to pursue, however, they were frustrated by events over which he had no control. At daybreak on the following morning, Francis de Langy was awakened by a violent knocking at the great doors of the chateau; and starting up confused, he sprang to the window, when the cause of the noise was explained by the first object his eye fell upon. There was a *chaise-de-poste* at the door with a large party of the *maréchaussée*; and, hurrying out as fast as possible, he was running down to forbid the gates to be opened, in order to give time for some consultation with the count, when he met Monsieur d'Artonne himself, who, it would seem, had been roused earlier than his young host. He was somewhat pale, but his air was firm and collected.

"I have seen them, Francis," he said; "I have seen them. Do not try to stop them; it is all in vain now. We

will tell them of the assurances given by the intendant, and if they will not listen to them, we must even submit."

While he was yet speaking the doors of the *chateau* were thrown open, and the hall was in a minute filled with archers of the *maréchaussée*, having the same lieutenant at their head who had searched the place before.

"Now, sir," exclaimed the lieutenant, as Francis de Langy went down the stairs to meet him, "will you deny that Monsieur d'Artonne is here now?"

"Certainly not," replied the young gentleman: "he is here; there he stands."

The lieutenant walked up to him at once, and laid his hand on his shoulder, saying, "Monsieur d'Artonne, you are my prisoner. You will be so good as to get into the *chaise-de-poste* at the door, in order to proceed instantly to Riom."

"You will permit me, I suppose," replied the count, "to make some preparations, and to take leave of my wife and child. But, in the first place, let me inform you that I returned to France openly and unconcealedly, upon the distinct assurance given by Monsieur de L——, one of the high officers of the crown, that I should not be subject to arrest or imprisonment till a day arrived appointed for my trial."

"My orders, sir," replied the lieutenant, "are direct from Paris: I have nothing to do but to obey them. Madame d'Artonne and your family can be called to take leave of you. What necessities you want with you can be packed up by a servant. Being now under my arrest, I cannot lose sight of you even for a moment."

A scene now took place of a kind which does not bear description. Agitated and terrified Madame d'Artonne and Julie could not fail to be, and yet both strove to display as much calmness as might suffer their love to appear without grieving him they loved. But little time was given for the parting. The officer, now having power in his hand, used it to wipe out his former disappointment; and in five minutes from the moment that his hand was placed upon Monsieur d'Artonne's shoulder, he had hurried him into the *chaise-de-poste*, taking his seat beside him.

The carriage drove rapidly from the gates, and then Madame d'Artonne and Julie gave way to the tears they had previously suppressed.

"We must part again, I fear," said Madame d'Artonne: "I must follow my husband to Auvergne as speedily as may be."

"No, my dear madam," replied Francis; "we do not part, for I will accompany you. You want a son, Julie wants a brother, both a protector, and I must do my best to be so."

My staying here to watch the proceedings in this cause is all in vain. Heaven only knows when it will terminate, and it is not worth my while to wait day after day frequenting those dull courts. I have heard of men thus wearing away their lives, grinding down soul and body on the hard stone of the law. Our good friend Arnoux will remain here and let me know what takes place. Say not a word, my dear lady: I am resolved."

It was arranged as he wished; but he had calculated too rapidly in regard to Monsieur Arnoux, for the abbé mildly expressed his determination to accompany his former pupil to Auvergne. It seems at first sight strange that men in years always attribute to long life the gift of experience; they think that knowledge must be gained by time, and are always convinced that just according to the period they have lived in the world must be their acquaintance with the world, and the ignorance of those who are younger than themselves. But so it is, and perhaps it is very natural, for they have no gauge by which to measure the amount of what others have acquired but that which they have acquired themselves; and thus the good Abbé Arnoux, simply because he had seen more than sixty years, fancied that he had infinitely more experience than Francis de Langy, who had not seen twenty—forgetting that the only serviceable experience is derived from an acquaintance with men, things, and events, and not from hours, months, or years; so that many a one is a child at seventy, and many a man, full-grown in intellect and old in experience, has not a grey hair on his head.

"No, my dear Francis," he said; "you want some one, in the difficult circumstances in which you are placed, to guide and counsel you. You always were quick, reasoning, and intelligent; but you cannot have the experience which is acquired by age and knowledge of the world, and I must go with you to supply any deficiency in that respect."

Francis could not refrain from a smile; but he yielded to the good abbé's wish the more willingly as he thought that, if anything called him from Auvergne, it might be a comfort both to Madame d'Artonne and to Julie to have the excellent old man with them. All was now the bustle of preparation in the Chateau de St. Medard. Horses were sent for from Senlis, the carriage of the countess was brought forth, and its ample sides were stored with all that was necessary, and a hasty meal was taken in the saloon while waiting for the return of the messenger. The horses arrived, and while, with the due deliberation of French postilions, the personages who had brought them were tying them, not harnessing them on, Francis de Langy proceeded to visit different parts of the chateau, putting by various papers, and locking up drawers

and cabinets. He was surprised in the corridor, as he came out of his own room, to meet good Louise Pelet, habited as if for a journey.

"Why, Louise," exclaimed her young master, laughing, "are you going too?" and, somewhat to his surprise, he found that it was even so.

In her rapid and abrupt manner, Louise explained with a very few words her intentions, which, as far as she had the power of carrying them into execution, were always as irrevocable as the decrees of the Medes and Persians.

"Oh, yes," she said; "I'm going too. As you are to marry Mademoiselle Julie, she must have somebody to wait upon her whenever the *noces* take place. Besides, she had better have a woman with her now. Madame's maid is but a gay flighty girl—in love, too, I believe, with that scapegrace Jean Marais, for she has been doing nothing but crying ever since he has been sent to the galleys. Then, monsieur, if you are to be away so far as Auvergne, how do I know that you'll ever return? So you see, sir, I'm going too;" and with a low curtsey and a gay laugh she ran down to put upon the vehicle the handbox she carried.

The proceedings of Louise, however, caused some little delay, as it was with difficulty so many persons could be accommodated in the carriage; and the only choice for Francis de Langy was either to make the servant he proposed to take with him ride post or to leave him behind. He chose the latter, for the money which he had in the chateau was of no great amount, and this being settled the party set out.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A WRITER may surely be permitted to complain to his indulgent and compassionate public of the difficulties under which he labours, and more especially when the nature and constitution of the reader's mind forms a part, and a very principal part, of that difficulty.

Now, to write for the English nation a story, the scene of which is laid in a foreign country, and which relates to foreign manners and customs, is no such easy task; for every man in this world entrenches his powers of belief, through which alone his imagination may be won, within several circles of strong fortification. In the first place, the very head-quarters, the prætorium of his camp, lies within the area of what he has seen and known himself. Anything within that limit is instantly received as a friend; in other words, is at once credited. Beyond that is the circle of facts which he has commonly heard, but does not know by the evidence of his own senses—the daily occurrences in his own country, his own society, and his own age. Here, too, whatever he meets with is suffered to pass without challenge or much examination. Beyond that, however, come spots upon which he has placed sentinels, extraordinary events, customs, and manners, that he does not know of; things not in themselves at all improbable, but which are new to him; and here, if a stranger puts his foot, he is immediately stopped, obliged to render an account of himself, and to give many a passport, at the risk of being driven back, or perhaps shot; and beyond this again a glacis, ravelins, hornworks, half-moons, redoubts, and outworks beyond number, amongst which nobody is admitted without his eyes being blindfolded, a passport or a flag of truce in his hand, and the strictest precaution to guard against treachery. In short, reader, although every one acknowledges that truth is more wonderful than fiction, no one acts upon the admission and receives Truth as a friend, unless he come in the most homely garb it is possible to assume, more especially if he have a foreign air about him.

Nature, men say, is the same everywhere, and very possibly the assertion may be true. But, as there can be no doubt that the features and complexion of a Spaniard, a Frenchman, and an Italian, are all distinct from those of an

Englishman, so there are vast differences between the mode in which a Frenchman, a Spaniard, or an Italian would act in certain circumstances, and the way in which an Englishman would conduct himself in the same case. The reason of this disquisition is, that we are going to place before the eyes of the reader a scene, and make him acquainted with an event, which would be improbable, nay, well-nigh impossible, in England, but which is quite probable, and has actually more than once happened, in France within the last twenty years.

In a fine spring morning of the month of May, a tall, stout, good-looking man, dressed in the broad-brimmed hat, brown coat, knee-breeches, and slate-coloured gaiters of a Breton peasant, and mounted upon a stout, well-looking Brittany pony, rode up to the little gate before the Ferme Godard, which, as the reader well knows, was many a long mile from the fair land in which the horse at least had its birth.

When last we spoke of the Ferme Godard, we showed a vast improvement which had taken place in its appearance since the time when Gerard Latouches first married, and brought home Marguerite his wife. But now an alteration of a different kind was to be remarked. The appearance of the farm had fallen off, especially about the house; some of the wooden railings before it had been torn down and used by the peasantry for firewood; the little garden in front of the door was utterly neglected; the windows of one room only were open, the rest were all closed; and the cows, which a boy was driving out to pasture, looked rough, lean, and miserable.

As the stranger dismounted from his horse and undid the gate, the cowboy aforesaid called out in an indifferent tone, "She is not there; she is gone to the town."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Jean Marais. "Do you mean Madame Latouches?"

"Jannettone, to be sure," replied the boy, and sauntered on after his cattle.

"Well, I shall find some one at all events," said Jean Marais; and fastening his horse to the paling, he walked in and laid his hand upon the latch.

The door, however, was fastened; and though it gave way a little at the top when Jean Marais pushed it, yet it was evidently locked and the key taken out.

"Safe bind, safe find," said Jean Marais; then he looked at his horse, and then at the door, and then considered for a moment or two what he should do.

He was turning to mount and ride away, when the only

window which was not boarded up with rough shutters struck his eye. It was low, as in fact was the whole building, and saying to himself, "A window is as good as a door at any time, if it isn't too high," he walked up to it, intending to throw it open. It too was fastened, however; but as he made the attempt, a faint voice broken by a low cough inquired, "Who is there?"

"That's a difficult question to answer," said Jean Marais to himself, with a very peculiar expression of countenance; but proceeding straight to the door of the house, he put his powerful shoulder against it, stretching out his right foot to gain a purchase, and with a strong push burst it open, muttering, "*Demande pardon*, Monsieur Latouches; but you are a great rogue, I've a notion," and he walked into the house.

At first all seemed vacant; the rooms on both sides of the passage were open, but dark; and Jean Marais, who, as the reader knows, was well acquainted with the Ferme Godard, passed into a little transverse corridor, which led him direct to the chamber, the window of which he had tried. To his surprise, however, he found that door locked, but the key luckily had been left in it, which saved him the trouble of effecting an entrance by forcible means; and, unlocking it, he went in with an inquiring look around. The air was close and hot, faint and sickly; and on a pallet-bed near the window lay the emaciated form of her whom we have once depicted as the pretty maid of the Marchioness de Langy.

She was dressed, and, with a little table beside her, was lying down apparently for repose; but her countenance told very plainly that life was not to be long a guest in that bosom. The colourless lips, the clear, ashy grey of the flesh, the sunken cheeks, the eager and restless eye as she gasped for breath, the quick heaving of the breast, as well as the thin bony hand that rested upon the table beside her, all spoke that the great enemy of mortal life had nearly achieved his conquest.

As Jean Marais entered, she seemed to hide something behind her with her left hand; but the moment she recognised him, a smile full of joy and satisfaction came upon her lip. "Oh, Jean, Jean!" she cried, "God has sent you to me!" But before she could inform him why she seemed so pleased to see him, a fit of coughing seized her, and sitting up she gasped, and struggled with the paroxysm for several minutes, while Jean Marais drew a chair and placed himself by her side.

"Why, how goes it, Marguerite?" he asked in a kindly tone. "How came you to be locked in here, and nobody with you? You don't seem to be well."

He did not tell her that he had heard she was dead, and had made up his mind that Gerard Latouches had married again.

"Ah! ill indeed, Jean," she replied; "but I think I shall get well yet in spite of him;" for she still clung to that strange expectation of life which in some long and lingering diseases never expires but with life itself. "But I say, Jean—God, I am sure, has sent you to me. Here, here is a letter which I have written to-day. Take it, and promise me you will deliver it; it is the first time I have been alone for an hour, and I wrote it directly. It contains the truth, Jean, the whole truth—all the wickedness which that man Latouches forced me to commit. Take it, take it, Jean, and swear you will deliver it."

"To whom?" asked Jean Marais; "to Madame de Langy? I dare not set my foot in Paris, my good Marguerite."

"No, no," said the sick woman: "it is to Martin Latouches, the count's intendant, who lives at Ailly, near Langy. He is a good man, and was always kind to me, and used to say he must attend to his master's interests. Do you promise, Jean? do you promise upon your soul?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Jean Marais; "I'll deliver it to him."

"Well, then," said the woman, who had kept the letter in her hand all the while, "get a light and some sealing-wax. There used to be a piece of wax in the table drawer in the kitchen, but they have not let me out of this room for many a month."

"I will get it," replied Jean Marais; and away he went upon the search, leaving the door of the room open behind him.

A small piece of sealing-wax was soon found; but he had more difficulty in obtaining a light, for the fire had gone out in the kitchen, and it was long ere he could discover where the flint and steel were kept. At length, however, he found them, and lighted a candle; but while he was doing so, he thought he heard a somewhat strange and unpleasant noise proceeding from the room in which he had left his cousin's wife, and finishing his task as fast as possible, he hurried back, saying "*Parbleu!* it sounds as if she were choking."

When he re-entered the room he found that Marguerite had fallen back on the pillow, and, with her eyes closed, was gasping long and heavily. He spoke to her, but she did not answer; he spoke again louder than before, but the sense of hearing seemed gone, for she took no notice.

"She is dying," thought Jean Marais, "or has perhaps fainted from over-excitement;" and taking some water, he sprinkled it in her face, but it produced no effect; and he

stood gazing upon her with no slight degree of grief and compassion.

It was not one of those calm and quiet deathbeds which we so often see depicted in novel and in tract, and which sometimes are actually witnessed: it was a last, long, terrible struggle between life and death, where the immortal spirit seemed to have fled, and consciousness was certainly altogether gone nearly a quarter of an hour before mere animal life was extinct. Jean Marais did all that he could think of to allay the poor woman's sufferings, or to rouse her back to thought and feeling, but it was in vain; and at the end of the time I speak of the breathing suddenly stopped and the eyes opened, but sense and expression had left them, and Marguerite Latouches was dead.

Jean Marais had not been prepared for such a scene, and he was struck and affected. He could have witnessed a dozen men die in battle without much thought; ay, and would have felt very different and less sensible emotions if he had seen them give their necks to the axe or to the cord; but now he was touched, he knew not well how, and kneeling down—partly mechanically, from habits acquired in youth, and partly from that feeling of reverence towards Him who gives and takes the soul, which the sight of death is sure to produce—he uttered a short prayer. Yes, reader, and rose a better man than he was before; for he said to himself, "I will be more careful of my doings for the future," and such thoughts are the beginnings of amendment.

He next took up the letter which had dropped upon the bed from the poor woman's hand, and looking at it for a moment he said, "I may as well read it. That fellow Martin is every bit as bad as his brother, only the sleeker villain of the two. I'll read it!" and opening the paper he began, and perused with some difficulty the trembling lines which the hand of poor Marguerite Latouches had traced, exclaiming from time to time as he did so, "Ah, *coquin!* I thought so; he's cunning enough—forced the poor woman to commit such a cheat. I'll have a copy of this, at all events," and with the same pen and ink which Marguerite had used he hastily transcribed the letter, and then sealed the original.

"I don't think I ought to give the scoundrel this," continued Jean Marais, standing and gazing on the corpse; "he'll only burn it: and yet I promised thee, poor thing, and I'll begin by keeping my word; but I had better get away before any one comes in," and replacing the candle, flint, and steel, where he had found them, he locked the room which contained the dead body, and issued out of the house.

The door of the farm puzzled him a little, for he wished

to leave as few traces of his visit behind as possible; but driving in the staple, which he had forced out, he pushed back the bolt into the lock, and fastened the whole with the latch. Then mounting his horse, he rode off and took his way to the nearest town.

It may seem strange to the reader that a great and important cause should be going on in Paris, that one of the principal witnesses should be supposed, by most of the parties concerned, to have died eight or nine months before, and yet that not even the good curé of the parish, who had seen her and ministered to her, should take the trouble of making it known that she had partially recovered from the first violent attack, which had seemed likely to kill her in a few hours, and was dragging on a sickly life, shut up in her own house. Reader, in that day there were not three of such things as newspapers in France. The word *journaux* was scarcely known, and the principal paper, the "Gazette de France," was confined in its circulation almost entirely to the capital, to a few great towns and a few great houses. There was not a person within twenty miles of the Ferme Godard who had heard one word of the famous cause of De Langy; and this will not seem extraordinary to you when I vouch for it, on my word of honour, that an excellent friend of mine, a country curé in France, very well versed in the Commentaries of Cæsar, and who could have pointed out every station in the Appian or Flaminian way, once asked me, first, who were the nations that fought at Waterloo, and whether he could not come to see me in England by land.

To return, however, to Jean Marais. When he reached his resting-place, he felt himself shaken in his resolution of keeping his promise; but he would not suffer himself to be tempted, so that the next morning, about eleven o'clock, found him at the door of Monsieur Martin Latouches, the intendant of the Marquis de Langy. He met with him at home, and delivered the letter into his own hands. But our good friend's purpose did not stop there, for he was fully impressed with the idea that his worthy cousin, Martin Latouches, would destroy the letter, and make not the best possible use of the contents. He therefore sat down, drank a glass of wine which was offered to him, and began to chat with an easy and unconcerned air, although, to say the truth, he did not feel himself at all in a state of safety in the house of Monsieur Martin Latouches. That worthy gentleman, in the mean time, begged Jean Marais' pardon with the utmost politeness; and after examining the seal of the letter, as if to see it had not been broken, he opened it and read the contents.

"Ha!" he said; "ha! did you write this for her, Jean?"

"Oh, no," replied Jean Marais, in an indifferent tone; "she can do that very well for herself, I fancy. At all events, it was written and ready when I called at Godard. I hadn't time to stay a minute with her, poor thing, though she seemed very ill—dying, I think. What is it about? Complaining of Gerard, I dare say. He always was a brute, and used to thrash her amazingly. But she told me you had been good and kind to her, and would see right done."

"I never meddle between man and wife," answered Martin Latouches, and there dropped the subject; nor could Jean Marais, with all his skill, induce him to utter a word which might afford an indication of his purposes in regard to the letter.

At length, however, our friend Jean rose, saying, "Well, Martin, if the poor woman dies from Gerard's bad treatment, she has given you a fine hold upon him, which he won't particularly like, but which I dare say you will."

"Why? why?" demanded Martin; "I don't see how she has given me any hold upon him."

"Why, if you were to show that letter to Monsieur de Langy," replied Jean Marais, "he would turn him out of the farm, and I know that you and Gerard had some transactions together regarding the fields at the back of Godard, which may make you very glad to possess a little power over him."

"Oh dear, no," rejoined Martin; "I doubt not Gerard will do all that is quite right."

"It will be the first time in his life, then," said Jean Marais, "for his principle has always been to get a friend's help and then kick him down stairs. But, good day—I must go;" and shaking hands with his dearly-beloved cousin, he left him and trotted away.

"He's quite right, he's quite right!" cried Martin Latouches, rubbing his hands as soon as Jean Marais was gone. "Master Gerard has shown me the cloven foot already; but now I have him, now I have him. This little piece of paper puts him in my power;" and taking out a large pocket-book, in which he kept his most valuable papers always about him, he laid the letter safely amongst the rest.

A new fit of consideration then came over him, and scratching his head with his fore-finger, he said in a deliberate tone, "Thou art a sweet youth, Jean, but methinks it would be better for all parties if thou wert restored to the galleys. Ha! ha! ha! he fancies I know nothing about it, I suppose; but the sea air will do him good, and regular exercise is no bad thing. Water diet and exercise, said the great doctor—these are the grand physicians, and Jean will have them all at L'Orient. I will go and give notice to the *maréchaussée*

Probably he will go straight to St. Medard," and taking down his hat he walked out.

In the mean while our good friend Jean Marais, as his worthy cousin had thought, proceeded at once upon his way towards the chateau of St. Medard. But that chateau was at some distance, and Jean Marais knew that without knocking up his pony he could not reach it that night. He therefore proposed to ride some five leagues farther, and then to take up his abode at an inn upon the road. Jean Marais, however, was a wary person, as the reader has already been informed, and one who made use of his eyes upon every occasion. At the top of each hill that he reached, therefore, Jean made a point of pausing to look around him, and ere long he saw some signs of coming events which he did not at all approve. From a spot where he caught a distinct view of the road for several miles, he perceived three or four horsemen riding along at a very rapid rate, and there was something in their air which had so strong a touch of the *maréchaussée* in it, that Jean Marais resolved, without more ado, to trust to the fields and woods rather than the open highway. Every rood of the ground was known to him, and manœuvring skilfully, he was soon involved in paths with which no one but those whose early youth had been passed amongst them could be as well acquainted as himself. Another precaution also he took, judging at once that, if he were the object of pursuit, intelligence of his being in that neighbourhood must have been given by his worthy cousin; and perceiving, with his usual acuteness, the whole train of Martin Latouches' thoughts, he said to himself, "I must keep away from St. Medard, for he will send them to seek me there. I'll turn to the left towards Beaumont, and come round to the chateau the day after to-morrow from the other side. I must lodge in the woods to-night, I fear. However, it is fine warm weather, so that is no great hardship."

With such meditations Jean proceeded, avoiding all towns, and even villages, and only stopping for a minute or two at a hamlet or a farmhouse to get some food for himself or for his horse. The trees were now in full leaf; and, as the pony began to show symptoms of weariness towards five o'clock, the fugitive chose the first convenient wood that he met with, and, leading his horse into the heart of the dingle, he fastened him by tying his two fore-legs together, and prepared to make himself as comfortable a bed as circumstances permitted, in a place where the grass was short and dry.

He was now at the distance of about eight miles from St. Medard, and the spot which he had selected for his temporary abode was removed some fifty yards from a little green wood-path, marked only by the ruts of timber-carts and

prints from the hoofs that drew them. Scarcely, however, were Jean Marais' preparations completed, when he heard the quick sounds of horsemen riding, and, lying quite still, he distinguished a rustle amongst the leaves not far off, as if some large animal were making its way slowly and cautiously towards the very spot where he himself was concealed.

"Boar, stag, or man," said Jean Marais to himself, "I wish they would keep away, for I am too tired for company to-night;" but, raising his head a little, so as to look over some of the brushwood near, and moving it from side to side for the purpose of seeing in different directions through the apertures, he at length perceived, between himself and the lane we have mentioned, the figure of a man at the distance of about twenty yards from him, evidently attempting to conceal himself from some one passing along the road, by keeping close to a large neighbouring tree, which covered his person entirely on that side. Jean Marais watched him attentively for several minutes, till the sound of horses' feet died entirely away, and all was silent. The stranger still continued in the same position, however, and still Jean Marais kept his eyes fixed upon him with a look of great interest, till at length his pony, having satisfied himself with the grass near him, made a sort of hopping movement in advance, which instantly caused the man to turn round with a glance of apprehension.

"Hist, hist!" cried Jean Marais, in a tone calculated to reach the man's ears, but not to carry the sound any farther; "Antoine! Antoine! here is a friend."

The stranger bent his head, and gazed for a moment in the direction from which the voice proceeded, and then cautiously and slowly advanced, till, seeing Jean Marais fully, and recognising his face, he advanced and grasped him eagerly by the hand.

"Well met! well met!" they said mutually, but in a low voice; and rapid questions and answers succeeded as to each other's situation.

"Why, I have just been up to your place," said the last comer, "but I found nobody; and as I was going along back to Beaumont a party of the *maréchaussée* chased me; I don't know what for, but I always keep out of their way whenever I see them; and just now, as I want immediate speech of your young master, it would be especially unpleasant to be lodged in prison."

"What do you call my place?" asked Jean Marais.

"Why, the chateau of St. Medard," replied the other.

"Oh, no; you are mistaken," answered Jean Marais. "My last place was the galleys at L'Orient. But what do you want at St. Medard?"

The man started at the intelligence which his companion gave him, and mutual communications were then made, which ended in an agreement to pass the night where they were, Jean Marais dividing the provisions which he had brought with him, with as hospitable and courteous an air as if he had been receiving a guest in the servants' hall of St. Medard.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

In a melancholy house near the gate of the prison, the sad party which we have lately seen at St. Medard were collected about ten days after their departure for Auvergne. The count had arrived during the preceding week, and the first act of the Countess de Langy and her daughter was to apply at the gates for permission to see him. That permission, however, was sternly refused, and they were informed that he was *écroué au secret*, as the technical term was, and that he could be permitted to converse with no one. Grieved and disappointed, they returned to consult what was next to be done, in order to obtain at least the means of visiting and communicating with him for whom they were so deeply anxious. Advocates and persons learned in the law were sent for; but, as we have before seen, wherever arbitrary power exists, a part of it falls into the hands of all its subordinate agents; and in matters of criminal jurisdiction, the comfort and safety of a prisoner were very much at the pleasure of the officers of the crown. They had the opportunity of shutting him out from all means of making anything but a nominal defence; they could withhold from him those communications which might be absolutely necessary to establish his innocence; and he had no safeguard, in fact, but a faint and lingering respect for public opinion, and a fear of abusing too far the authority entrusted to them, lest they should be punished by the only power above them.

Such painful facts with regard to the situation of a husband and a father were now learned with grief and terror by Madame d'Artonne and Julie. The advocates said they could do nothing; the law was utterly impotent to open the prison gates, even for themselves, whose advice and assistance might be considered absolutely necessary to the prisoner; everything depended upon the will of the king, and of those to whom his authority was delegated. The provincial parliaments, though duly established as courts of law, could not

interfere in any shape; and the only assurance which could be given was, that the count could not be executed without trial.

To the new intendant of the province the first appeal of the count's wife and daughter was made; but he turned a deaf ear to their application, merely replying, that in regard to visits from the prisoner's family no violation of the ordinary course could take place. The count, he added, would have full opportunity of obtaining the assistance of lawyers before his trial, after his private interrogatories were concluded; but, so long as it was found necessary to keep him *au secret*, no one could be admitted. All, then, that remained was to wait in patience; but of course it could not be without grief, without anxiety, without the wearing, daily, hourly, continual sense of impending danger and sorrow. They looked up to the dark and heavy walls of the prison; they could see from the upper story of the house the small barred windows of those chambers, in one of which they knew him to be confined; and anxiously did mother and daughter watch those windows, sometimes fancying, as they saw a figure pass across, that it must be him they loved. Thus went by four days. They then determined to write to the count, and the concierge or jailer of the prison promised to deliver the letter; but they received no reply. Yet it was a consolation to have written; for all that they could hope to do was to give the prisoner some comfort, to win his thoughts a little from himself; and they were sure that nothing could produce that effect so well as the knowledge that they were near him.

At length there came a note addressed to the Countess d'Artonne, and written in a neat, regular, and precise hand, informing her that Monsieur de L——, the former intendant of that generality, had arrived in Paris in order to settle some affairs of his own, which the hurry of his departure had forced him to leave in disorder, and that he would have the honour of waiting upon her at an hour he named on the following day. Julie and Madame d'Artonne both looked rejoiced as the countess read the note aloud; for they were in hopes of obtaining through his means some mitigation of the severity with which the count was treated. But Francis de Langy heard it with a frowning brow and a burning heart—ay, and even with some impatience at the signs of pleasure which he perceived.

“Your enemy has come,” he said bitterly, “to see his work properly executed.”

But the moment the words had passed his lips, a consciousness of some of the sensations from which they sprang made the blood rise into his cheeks.

Julie, too, with that clear perception as to the feelings of love which is perhaps given only to woman, and that when she loves herself, saw more clearly into the heart of Francis de Langy than he did himself; and going over to the place where he sat, she said in a mournful and almost reproachful tone, but so low that nobody else could hear the words, "Do you doubt me, Francis? Am I not yours?"

"No, no, dear Julie; I do not doubt you," replied Francis de Langy; "but I grieve to see that you are indulging expectations which must be disappointed. This man has his own objects; he seeks but those; he cares for, he thinks of, nought else but how they may be gained. To them he will sacrifice everything that stands in his way—the hopes, the feelings, the life itself of others—not vehemently, not eagerly, but calmly, coldly, deliberately, as you see a man set his foot unconcernedly upon an ant-hill in his path, without considering for one moment how many of the insects he crushes to death. Dear Julie, I cannot make up my mind to meet this man here; the very sight of him is odious to me, and I fear I might forget myself. I will go away for a few hours, before the time he has named, and you shall tell me the result. Whatever it is will be softened coming from your lips."

"Perhaps it would be better," replied Julie, "for I am afraid you are too hasty, Francis."

As he proposed, so he acted; and half-an-hour before the arrival of the intendant, he roamed out into the country, thinking the sights that at every step presented themselves to the eye in that part of France might soothe or at least occupy his mind. But Francis de Langy was mistaken; it needs a double sunshine to make the face of nature look beautiful to man's eyes—the sunshine of the heart as well as the sunshine of the sky.

In the mean while, as the clock struck the hour he had appointed, Monsieur de L——, with his usual calm, deliberate step, and smooth, grave air, entered the house which had been taken by Madame d'Artonne, and was introduced into the room where she and Julie sat alone. After the first words of course were spoken and a slight pause had taken place, he said, addressing the countess, "I grieve inexpressibly, my dear madam, that you should be subjected to so much anxiety and sorrow; and indeed I take a personal interest in that which presses upon you at present; for I very much fear that some words which I accidentally spoke to Mademoiselle d'Artonne may have had a share in bringing back Monsieur d'Artonne to France, while events over which I have had no control have prevented those words from being verified."

"It was indeed those words, sir," said the countess, gravely,

"which induced my husband to return, and we have been greatly surprised and deeply mortified to find ourselves so much deceived."

"I should be as much so or more," replied Monsieur de L——, "if I had had any share in this sad affair; and I can assure you that I laboured most assiduously to change the determination of the crown, and to obtain permission for the count to remain at liberty. It appears, however, that some additional evidence has been obtained in regard to this business, and all that I could say was unavailing. Nevertheless, I still think that the count has done the very best thing he could do in returning to France, and I trust my presence may have some effect in mitigating the measures against him."

"Much do they need mitigation indeed," said the countess, "for I cannot but feel that they have been unnecessarily severe."

"I trust not, I trust not," repeated Monsieur de L——, with an appearance of grief. "What has been done, my dear madam, to make you judge so? The gentleman who succeeded me does, indeed, bear the reputation of being somewhat strict; but he always acts according to law, and would not, I am sure, go beyond the exact line of duty. What has been done, pray? what has been done?"

"Simply, sir," answered the countess, "that my husband, notwithstanding the previous examination by yourself, is placed, I understand, in solitary confinement, and all his family are denied admission to him; nor can even his advocates, or people of the law, obtain leave to speak with him."

"He is in fact *au secret*, my dear madam," replied Monsieur de L——, in a calm, business-like tone. "This is what happens to every prisoner accused of a serious crime; but after a time, when the case has been fully entered into, Monsieur d'Artonne will be permitted to see his lawyers, and probably his family. A wife, indeed, is sometimes allowed, even under such circumstances as exist, to see her husband for a few minutes in the presence of one of the jailers, but of course she must be unaccompanied. No two persons, and indeed none but a wife, can expect that indulgence."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Madame d'Artonne eagerly. "Do you think there is any chance of my being admitted if I go alone?"

"I think I can ensure that for you," said Monsieur de L——. "If you will do me the honour of accepting my arm to the house of the intendant, I will use my best endeavours to obtain an order for your admission."

"Instantly, instantly!" cried the countess, starting up; "I will be with you in a moment;" and she went to prepare for going out.

Monsieur de L—— remained almost in silence, merely saying a few words to Julie, expressive of kind feeling for her father's situation, and hope that he would be able to establish his innocence. The countess returned after an absence of scarcely two minutes, and Monsieur de L—— conducted her to the house of the intendant, where he left her in a small ante-room for about a quarter of an hour, while he proceeded to "employ his utmost eloquence," he said, in order to procure her the indulgence she desired. She could hear, as she sat waiting anxiously for the result, the soft and mellifluous voice of Monsieur de L——, and the somewhat rude and abrupt tones of his successor in office. At length the latter was heard to burst into a laugh, which wrung the heart of poor Madame d'Artonne, who said to herself, "He mocks me and my anxiety." But the moment after, Monsieur de L—— returned with a paper in his hand, and a look of satisfaction on his countenance.

"Here is the order," he said, "and I will accompany you to the gates of the prison to ensure that there be no obstruction."

Madame d'Artonne thanked him a thousand times, and as they walked onward he continued, "Pray assure the count of my great anxiety to serve him. Should I be here when this close confinement is at an end, before his trial, I will see him and consult with him on what is to be done. But in the mean time ask if he can point out any way in which I can be of service to him; and remember, though I have no longer any official power in this province, my influence is not inconsiderable. I will go and stay with Mademoiselle d'Artonne till you return. They will not allow you to remain long, and you can then tell me what the count says."

Madame d'Artonne made no objection, for at that moment her whole thoughts were occupied with her husband; and the moment Monsieur de L—— had left her at the gates of the prison, he hurried back to spend the intervening time with Julie—an object but for which it is probable no order for Madame d'Artonne's admission would have been obtained.

Julie d'Artonne was much surprised to see him re-enter the room in which she sat, and a feeling of anxious alarm, at she knew not what, came over her; but Monsieur de L—— explained to her calmly what he was pleased to call the purpose of his return, and the real purpose he proceeded to execute.

"Pray, Mademoiselle d'Artonne," he said, after a few words on other subjects, "may I ask if you have informed your mother of the conversation which took place between yourself and me in the park of St. Medard?"

"I did, sir," replied Julie; "I always tell my mother everything I think important."

"Indeed!" exclaimed her companion, musing. "I had almost fancied not," he added, after a few minutes.

"Why so?" demanded Julie. "I am not aware, sir, that I have done anything which should make you doubt my sincerity towards my mother, or my confidence in her."

"Not at all, my dear young lady; not at all," replied Monsieur de L——; "but I thought you might not have told her on this occasion, simply from the fact of her saying nothing to me regarding the principal subject of our conversation. I can easily conceive a young lady," he continued, "possessed with a romantic passion, and believing herself bound in honour to follow a particular course, resolving to adhere to her promises, however little they may be really binding, and to sacrifice even her father's life rather than break them. But I can hardly imagine a mother neglecting to urge her strongly upon the subject, and not representing to her what duty and a just view of her obligations would induce her to do."

Julie had remained in silent astonishment, but when he paused she exclaimed, "Sacrifice my father's life, did you say, sir? Surely you yourself told me that he was likely, most likely, to be acquitted by his judges."

"Other facts have since inspired," replied Monsieur de L——, thoughtfully, "and I scarcely dare encourage such hopes at present. I fear the case is an unfortunate one."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Julie; "they never can condemn him. Did I not see, did I not know ——" She paused abruptly, the colour came into her cheek, and she covered her eyes with her hands, adding after a moment or two, "They will not condemn my father, I am sure."

"I hope not," replied the intendant; "but it is worth your while to consider that, if they do, it will then be too late. As sure as he is condemned, the count dies. I know the king's resolution upon such subjects; once the case is proved, the punishment is inevitable. Your decision must be made, Mademoiselle d'Artonne, before your father's trial."

"Alas, sir!" answered Julie, "my decision is made. I have bound myself by vows that cannot be broken."

"And will this cruel young man," said Monsieur de L——, "compel your observance of vows which may cost your parent's life?"

"Whatever might be his feelings, sir," replied Julie, "those vows were sanctioned, nay, commanded, by my father. His very last injunctions to me before he made his escape were, to observe them under any circumstances and

at all risks. He seems absolutely to have foreseen what has happened ; and he himself exacted a promise of me, upon no consideration whatsoever to give my hand to any but Francis de Langy."

"Or Latouches," said Monsieur de L——; and then proceeded in the same unmoved tone to ask, "Pray, Mademoiselle d'Artonne, did you, on your father's return, communicate to him what I told you? Did you explain to him the answer I received from the king on my application for an order to suspend proceedings?"

"I had not time," answered Julie: "he arrived in the evening—he was arrested before I saw him the next morning."

An angry flush passed across Monsieur de L——'s brow, and he muttered to himself, "Too soon." He replied, however, the next moment, aloud, "Your father will of course set you free from such engagements immediately, and then ——"

"I think not, sir," said Julie: "my belief is that my father foresaw something like that which has occurred, and that he made up his mind to the result. At all events, there is no use in inquiring what I might do till my father has himself seen me and told me his own wishes. You assure me that I shall have the opportunity of visiting him before his trial?"

"I hope and trust so," replied the minister; "but he can write. I will take care that he shall have the means of writing to you."

"That will not be sufficient," answered Julie d'Artonne. "I must see him and speak with him; I must hear him, from his own lips, revoke all that he has said."

"And then," exclaimed Monsieur de L——, "then, if he do revoke his injunctions, and tell you to consider his former commands as air, then do you promise?"

"No!" replied Julie; "no! I promise nothing, for I have no power to promise anything till I am wholly and voluntarily set free. I should look upon my vow as half broken already if I were to make any engagement founded upon the prospect of its being dissolved."

She could see the minister's right hand clasp tightly upon the arm of the chair in which he was sitting, but not the slightest emotion was visible in his countenance; and ere he could reply Madame d'Artonne entered.

"They have given me but five minutes," said the countess; "poor five minutes; and yet it is a great consolation."

"It must be, indeed, madam," answered the minister in an unembarrassed tone; "and I trust, ere many days be over, to be able to procure the same satisfaction for Mademoiselle d'Artonne, as I think it absolutely necessary for her future

repose of mind and for her father's safety, that she should be permitted to see him. For the present I will bid you adieu," and thus saying he retired.

The countess turned, as soon as he was gone, to ask her daughter what his last words meant, but Julie had fled to her chamber to weep.

CHAPTER XLIX.

FOR nearly three weeks after the period of Monsieur de L——'s visit, the family of the Count d'Artonne were denied permission to see him. The minister was absent in another part of Auvergne, and the count was still kept in solitary confinement. During that period the grief and anxiety of Julie d'Artonne, great as they were on her father's account at first, had been increased a thousand-fold by the terrible alternative that Monsieur de L—— had put before her. No language can describe what she underwent, as, day by day and night after night, the same fearful idea presented itself to her mind, that upon her might depend her father's life—that she might be called upon either to see him die by a death of public shame, or to break her most solemn engagements to a man whom she deeply and truly loved, and give her hand to one whom she regarded with dislike and dread. She felt that it was not right to conceal from Francis de Langy what had taken place between herself and the intendant; but still she shrank from informing him from day to day, ever hoping that something might occur to remove the painful difficulty under which she laboured, and still resolved to perform the task before she was permitted to see her father. Nor was the heart of her lover much more at ease; for Julie had told him on his return that she had much to say to him, but could not speak it then; and each day that passed he saw her check growing paler, her eye more anxious, while the struggle in her mind wore away her youthful beauty, "like a moth fretting a garment."

Nor did Julie communicate the facts to her mother, though the countess inquired what had been her conversation with Monsieur de L—— during her absence. "Forgive me if I do not tell you, my dear mother," she said, anxious to escape any aggravation of feelings already too bitter; "you shall hear all after I have seen my father." But it seemed as if

that hour were never to come, as each day they applied for admission, but were always refused.

At length, on their return one day, they found that Monsieur de L—— had called during their absence, and to him the countess determined to apply. Her application was not in vain; for the very next morning the prohibition was removed, and it was notified to the count that within certain hours he might see his family and friends, and consult with his advocates at all times. Julie now felt that she could no longer delay communicating to Francis de Langy all that had been weighing upon her heart for the last three weeks, and she told him the whole, with many a tear and many an assurance of unabated affection and tenderness.

Francis heard her in silence, grieved, agitated, and indignant. "Is it possible, Julie," he said, when she had done, "is it possible that you do not comprehend the plan of this villain? Do you not perceive how he first induced you to aid in persuading your father to return, in order that he might get him and you into his power, that by the father's danger he might work upon the child? Do you not see how he broke his word with you, and had your father instantly arrested, in order that he might make the daughter's hand the price of the parent's life? And even now, Julie—even now he is probably still deceiving you. Perhaps the very sacrifice itself, could Julie d'Artonne make up her mind to wed such a monster as this, would not attain the object that you seek, and that your peace and mine would be destroyed for ever without even securing your father's life. But can you, Julie, dream of violating your promises to me, and uniting yourself to a man whom, even while you vow to love and honour him, you must hate and despise? I will never believe that your father can wish, nay, permit, such a sacrifice. Ask him, Julie—ask the count himself, now that the doors of his prison are open to you, and by his decision will I abide. But tell him, dear Julie, all you feel; tell him that you see and know that this man has betrayed him—has lured him back again with false hopes; and, moreover, tell him also that I have doubts—many, many doubts—of the promise which he declares the king has made. I do not believe it; I think it another falsehood springing from his own black heart."

"But the letter, Francis—the letter which he has shown me," said Julie.

"It might mean many things," replied Francis de Langy. "If you have told me the contents correctly, dear Julie, a letter precisely similar—I believe, word for word the same—was sent to my father. It, too, said that the king would not interfere, 'except under the circumstances before-mentioned.'

But what were those circumstances? As my father explained the words to me, they were, that the count should be able to prove that he killed his adversary only in his own defence. I do not believe this man's tale, Julie; it seems to me absurd and incredible. But, as I have said, let the count judge for himself. I will not accompany you to him. Tell him all, Julie, and I will see him afterwards."

"You blame me, Francis," exclaimed Julie, looking sadly in his face; "you think I do not love you. But, oh! you do not know what a terrible thing it is for a daughter to be told that she must either sacrifice him she loves best on earth or cast away her father's last hope of life."

"Nay, Julie," said Francis de Langy, pressing her to his bosom. "I do not blame you, I do not doubt your love; but I see that you still have some trust in this man, and I have none—none in the world. I believe him to be a villain to the very core; I think he is even now deceiving you, and that you will most bitterly repent having trusted him, even in the smallest degree, though perhaps too late. But go to your father, dear Julie; I hear the countess calling for you. Remember that this is not his only chance of life, for as yet we cannot judge whether he will be condemned or not; and if acquitted, how much more honourable, how much more satisfactory, must it be to himself than to owe his existence to favour purchased by the sacrifice of his child!"

As he spoke, Madame d'Artonne called again, and Julie hastened down to accompany her to the prison. Francis de Langy betook himself to the room of the Abbé Arnoux, and waited for nearly two hours in a state of indescribably anxious suspense.

At length the countess and her daughter returned, and a foot was instantly heard upon the stairs. Julie rapidly came up towards the abbé's room; and Francis de Langy's heart beat high, for he was sure that Julie would not bring tidings calculated to crush all his hopes and affections, with so quick a step as that. He opened the door just as she was knocking, and the moment he did so she cast herself into his arms. "He has decided, Francis," she said; "he has decided. Thank you, dear Francis, for leaving him the choice. He will stand his trial, he says, whatever comes of it, and I am now yours for ever."

Julie wept, but her tears were calmer and gentler than they had been before; and the good abbé, taking her by the hand, led her to a chair, saying, "Sit down, my dear child, and tell us how this matter has gone, for Francis here has been relating to me the painful circumstances in which Monsieur de L—— has placed you. It was not right of him at all; it is grossly immoral and wicked to make that which

should be decided simply by the principles of justice and equity depend in any way upon favour. I am sure the count thinks so too ; but tell us how it all went."

"On going to the prison with my mother," answered Julie, "I found they would admit us to my father's cell only one at a time, so I had to wait till she came out. As soon as I saw him I informed him of everything that had happened, and for a time he seemed much moved and doubtful. However, I concealed nothing from him, as I had promised you, Francis. I told him all my own feelings, all yours, all you had said, all you suspected ; and he, like you, has no confidence in the sincerity of Monsieur de L——. He said it was evident he had been entrapped for the minister's own purposes, and he doubted much whether that man would and could keep faith in regard to the immediate pardon. He thought the tale improbable, and scarcely to be believed. But at the same time he seemed to derive hope, in regard to the issue of his trial, from the very eagerness with which Monsieur de L—— pressed his suit. 'It is the estates of Artonne that he seeks,' said my father, 'and those he could not possess if I were destined to die by the hands of the executioner, for then those estates would be forfeited.' After a little time, however," continued Julie, "he thought he would make a trial of Monsieur de L——, and for that purpose sent ~~me~~ to him. My mother went with me, though I was to speak to him alone ; and when I saw him, I asked him in my father's name if he would put a pledge in writing to obtain an order to supersede all proceedings if I gave him my hand. He would not consent, however : he said it might be used against him ; that it might ruin him for ever with the king ; but he told me that he would plight his word, that he would take his oath, and said that was surely all Monsieur d'Artonne could desire. He added a great many soft words and kind assurances ; but I only replied that I would tell my father what he said, and left him. When I did tell my father, he replied that it was very evident the man was trying to deceive us, but that even before I came back he had made up his mind. 'I will never hear of this matter again, Julie,' he said ; 'it is too hard for me and for you. I will stand my trial whatever come of it ; and let the result be what it may, you are the wife of Francis de Langy.' He turned away his head as he spoke," she added, "and gazed out of the window as if he saw something in the sky, and then he continued, slowly but firmly, 'No, Julie, no ! I am fixed and determined. If I were told by the tongue of an angel that death would be the end of the trial which is now approaching. I would not consent to avoid that result by marrying you to a man who could play such a juggle between a father and a child. Give

your hand where your heart is given, my love, and where you are bound by vows you shall not break for me.'—Francis," she went on, putting her hand in his as he stood beside her, "you will forgive me when I tell you, that I then knelt down before my father, and told him that you had said you would abide by his decision—that I was sure you would not reproach me—that if he in his heart thought his life could be saved by any sacrifice of mine, I was ready to make it—that it would be but a short endurance, for that, united to a being whom I hated, the struggle would not long endure, and that Juliet d'Artonne would soon be but a thing that had been. I told him I knew he would not consent to sacrifice my life merely to save his own, but that there was more to be obtained if I could save him from the ignominy and shame of a condemnation and a death for crime. But he would not hear of it, Francis: he kissed me tenderly and often, and thanked me very much; but he said, 'No, Julie, no! I have learned to look better on these things than was once the case. The good Abbé Arnoux, in a long conversation that we had one day, showed me how far to estimate the opinions of men. If our own conscience goes with them, approving their censure or their praises, men's judgment of our actions may be valuable to us, as the voice of a world in which we live. But where our own conscience exculpates or blames in opposition to their decree, its decision must be paramount, as the voice of a world to which we go. Nevertheless,' he added, 'I do not feel afraid, Julie; something tells me I shall not be condemned. My own conscience acquits me, and I trust and believe that God, even in this world, will defend the right. Send Francis de Langy to me, my dear child,' he said, 'and remember that you keep unbroken your vows to him, by your duty towards me.'"

"I will go to him at once," answered Francis de Langy. "I believe, Julie, that he has judged wisely, both for his own sake and for our happiness."

After a few words, such as a lover may be supposed to speak from the heart's fulness under such circumstances, Francis left her, with the good Abbé Arnoux reasoning to her from those abstract principles which, framed in the closet, seldom fit the heart of any creature of the busy world; and, speeding on to the prison, he was without difficulty admitted to the Count d'Artonne.

He found him in an upper story, and in one of those small chambers called *cabanous*, where persons imprisoned upon serious charges were detained, without being suffered to mingle with the great herd of common culprits in the yard. Monsieur d'Artonne looked more cheerful than his young friend had expected to see him, and very much less depressed

than when he had visited him in confinement in the Chateau d'Artonne. Custom does wonders in these respects; and, indeed, the permission which had been given him to receive his family and friends, after three weeks of solitude, had raised his spirits and inspired him with new hopes.

"Ah, Francis!" he exclaimed, grasping his hand as soon as he beheld him, "welcome, welcome, my dear young gentleman! I have been strangely tempted since I saw you, Francis, but I have not yielded to the temptation. We have been deceived, my good youth, by this Monsieur de L——. He has lured me back to my destruction, hoping to wring from me my consent to Julie's marriage with him, but he has not succeeded."

"Do you think, my dear sir, asked Francis de Langy, seating himself on the edge of the small bed, which stood in a corner, for there was but one chair in the room—"do you think that the letter which I so unfortunately sent you, and which I fear had some share in bringing you back to France—do you think it also of his manufacture?"

"No," replied the count—"no; and on that letter a great part of the hope which I, almost unreasonably, entertain of a happy issue to my trial is founded. Tell me, Francis—where is the man who sent it to be met with? I trust you have not lost the clue."

"He was to come to St. Medard," said Francis de Langy; "but I had seen nothing of him up to the time of our departure."

"Good God!" cried the count; "that is unfortunate. He may come there and not know where to find you."

"No, no," answered Francis de Langy; "that is impossible; for before I came away I left word with every one of the servants, down to the very gamekeepers, to tell him, if he called, that I was in Auvergne; that you were arrested and in danger; and, lest he should write, I gave orders for all letters to be opened by my uncle's old butler, and that any one which could by any means refer to this business should be sent on by a special messenger, post haste. I left money for the expenses, that there might be no delay."

"Like yourself, my dear Francis," said the count, "and yet you have heard of nothing?"

"Nothing," replied Francis de Langy. "I have had various letters of business by the post, referring to the cause between me and this impostor, which is advancing slowly, and unfavourably to me it would seem, but not a word concerning your affairs."

"Unfortunate! unfortunate!" exclaimed the count. "Would to God we knew where to find this man! and yet you will think it strange when I tell you I am not even acquainted

with his name, or what he is. Of one thing, however, I am sure: he is a sincere friend. He guided and aided me for several days in the mountains, discovered the proceedings of my pursuers, and taught me how to baffle them; and, although I cannot conceive how he acquired this knowledge, he dropped hints regarding events which I thought no eye but my own had seen, which alarmed and agitated me at the time, but which give me hope even now."

"Good heaven!" ejaculated Francis de Langy, "would it not be worth while for me to go to Paris, and see if I can discover him by means of the people at whose house he lodged?"

The count shook his head. "Some common cabaret," he replied. "The time, too, is short; the trial, they say, will come on in a fortnight. I might put it off, the advocates tell me, for three or four days more; but I am impatient of this durance, and wish it to be brought to an end as soon as possible. Uncertainty is worse than death. Death I have faced a thousand times when I was young and a soldier, and I fear it not now: no, though it take the most terrible form that death can take to an honourable man. But one thing I do fear, Francis," he added, in a low and tremulous voice: "I fear the consequences of such a death to my poor wife and child. Remember that the condemned criminal here in France, according to our horrible and iniquitous laws, carries the shame, and the punishment also, to his guiltless family; that, if I fall in this affair, Julie will be pointed at and marked as the child of a murderer—her rank, her name, her station, will be gone. She will have nothing, Francis—nothing but her beauty, her innocence, her excellence, to bring you. Will you still love her, Francis? Will you never, even with a thought, condemn her?"

"I will love her, cherish her, console her, worship her, to my dying day!" said Francis de Langy; "and in another land we shall find justice."

"Well, then," answered the count, "I shall not fear death. What is it?" he continued, turning to one of the jailers, who entered the cell at that moment. "I thought I was to be permitted to see my friends without interruption till five o'clock."

"It is only this letter, sir," replied the jailer, "which has come post haste from the north, for Monsieur de Langy here. Madame d'Artonne has sent it up, as it came by a special messenger from St. Medard, she says; and as I thought it might be important——"

"Thank you, thank you, my friend!" said the count, eagerly. "What is it, Francis?"

"But a few words," answered Francis de Langy with a gla-

smile, "but they will take me to Paris immediately. This must be from our friend. Hear what he says: 'If Monsieur le Comte de Langy will come up to his father's house any time after four days from the receipt of this, he will meet with one whom he will be glad to see, and receive intelligence which will make him very happy.' Adieu, Monsieur d'Artonne, adieu!" continued Francis, holding out his hand to him. "Within an hour I will be upon a horse's back, posting away to Paris."

A difficulty which Francis de Langy had not foreseen, for he had never yet been exposed to any of the painful privations of poverty, had well-nigh delayed his journey. The money which he had brought with him, and which he calculated would last till he received fresh remittances from Paris, was now nearly exhausted. He knew that the pittance which was allowed to Madame d'Artonne was not more than sufficient for the daily wants before her; and, as he turned his steps homeward meditating on what was to be done, he felt that chilling sensation which almost all men must have experienced, from kings and statesmen down to the lowest grade, when they have found great and important purposes frustrated by the want of the means of carrying them into execution.

"What can be done?" thought the young gentleman. "I must not consult with Madame d'Artonne, for she would only stint herself, and perhaps fall into serious discomfort. I must tell my case to the abbé."

The abbé was accordingly spoken with, but the good man could give little or no aid; for, satisfied with the annuity which was charged upon the estates of St. Medard, almost everything that he received was given away in charity. After a moment's thought, however, he exclaimed, "Stay, stay, my dear Francis! I will get you the money," and, opening a little cabinet, he took out a gold *bougeoire* of considerable size, gazed at it for a moment, and then, walking to the door, exclaimed, "Louise! Louise Pelet!"

Louise came trotting down the stairs in a moment, and he whispered a few words to her.

"What are you going to sell that for?" cried Louise, in her abrupt way. "Nonsense, Monsieur Arnoux! I have heard you say that that was your mother's."

"Hush! hush!" answered Monsieur Arnoux, pointing to Francis de Langy: "it is for him. He wants to go to Paris directly, and there is not money."

"Now, good heaven!" exclaimed Louise, "that is too bad! If you want money, Monsieur François, why don't you come to me? I am as rich as Peru;" and away she ran without

waiting for a reply, bringing down a small rouleau of louis-d'ors, amounting to about forty.

"I shall not require all these, my good Louise," said Francis de Langy.

"Take them, take them!" cried Louise; "you never can have too much upon a journey;" and away she ran, which was, indeed, her usual way of bringing a conversation to an end.

Horses were immediately sent for; a farewell was taken of Madame d'Artonne and Julie; and with fresh hopes in his own bosom, and leaving fresh hopes behind him, Francis de Langy was soon galloping as hard as he could towards Paris, the postilion by his side.

CHAPTER L.

DURING three days and three nights Francis de Langy never reposed more than three hours at a time, and during part of his long and anxious ride to Paris he had to encounter storms of wind and rain, which added greatly to his fatigue. The sun had set about an hour before he passed the gates of the capital, and the *porte-cochère* of his father's house was closed when he arrived. As soon, however, as the Swiss appeared to open it for him, Francis inquired if anybody had lately been there to ask for him; but to his surprise the man replied, "Nobody at all, sir, but the young Count de Nesle."

Dismounting from his horse in the court-yard, he paid the postilion who was with him, while the servants who had come out ran in to announce his arrival, and another held a lamp to light him up to the countess's saloon. Stiff and weary, and fearing that he had been brought from Auvergne for no purpose, Francis mounted the stairs with a slow and heavy step, intending to retire to rest after a very brief interview with his father and mother. As he approached the door, however, which a servant held open, he perceived that they were not alone; but as he entered he paused suddenly, struck and overwhelmed with equal joy and astonishment, as, rising from a seat between the marquis and marchioness, his first, kindest, best of friends, Monsieur de St. Medard, stretched forth his hands towards him. The young man sprang into them with emotions which for several minutes took away all power of speech; and the care, and attention, and kindness, which the viscount had bestowed upon his youth, were all

well repaid at that moment by the heartfelt, inexpressible joy which he beheld in his adopted son.

"Then the letter was from you? the letter was from you?" exclaimed Francis de Langy, as soon as he could speak.

"It was from me, though not written by myself, Francis," said the viscount, holding up his right arm, which appeared dismembered of the hand. "I have had a little loss since I saw you, my poor boy, and I have not learned to write with my left hand yet."

"But the shipwreck! the shipwreck!" exclaimed Francis de Langy. *

"It is all very true," replied the viscount: "the poor 'Thetis' went down, and I am one of nineteen who were saved. Many a gallant fellow there found his grave, and I should have been lost too, but they put me into the smaller boat with the captain, and I was the last who left the vessel, for by that time I could not help myself, my hand being already crushed when the mainmast fell; and for three days and three nights we were upon the stormy sea, with nothing but that frail thin plank between us and destruction. At length we were picked up by an English frigate; but I will tell you all the rest hereafter, Francis. Let me hear something of the Count d'Artonne.—You are fatigued, my dear boy: you seem exhausted."

"I am indeed," said Francis de Langy, "for I quitted Clermont only on Tuesday last, and have ridden post hither with little or no sleep; and yet, my dear uncle, I must lose no time ere I speak to you about Monsieur d'Artonne. Indeed, you must do your best to save him."

"I will, I will," answered the viscount, earnestly. "But come, Francis; one word to your parents, and then to bed, for you look perfectly exhausted. I will talk with you while you are undressing."

"His clothes, too, are dripping," said the marchioness.

"He had better take some warm wine," said the marquis, "before he goes to bed;" and, glad of an opportunity of showing kindness and attention where their hearts told them that their conduct lately had been somewhat different, Monsieur and Madame de Langy showered all sorts of little cares upon their son, while Monsieur de St. Medard stood gravely by, feeling more deep affection though making less display of it.

"I will go to bed, my dear uncle," said Francis, as soon as they were by themselves, "because I believe that to lie down will be the best thing for me; but I am sure I shall not be able to sleep till I have told you all that has occurred since you went, and have asked your help and counsel."

"You shall do as you like, my dear boy," replied Mon-

sieur de St. Medard, "for I know that nothing is so oppressive to the body as an overloaded mind. I will stay beside you till you are inclined to sleep. I have heard that you have suffered much in many ways, and have borne it well; and I will do my best, Francis, to remove such difficulties and distresses from your future path."

Casting off his clothes and lying down, Francis de Langy related all that had taken place from the time of his uncle's departure for Pondicherry, about eleven months before. He touched but briefly, indeed, upon the long and tedious suit that was still going on regarding the inheritance of De Langy, and even more lightly upon the difficulties to which he had been exposed, and those with which he had been threatened, in consequence of some of Monsieur de St. Medard's arrangements having been left incomplete. Of the conduct of the Marquis and Marchioness de Langy, of the favour which they had shown a stranger who claimed their inheritance, of the encouragement which they had given to his demands, Francis said nothing at all; but on the history of Monsieur d'Artonne, on his escape from prison, his flight to England, his recapture, and his situation at the time, he spoke much and eagerly. He dwelt, too, at large on all that had occurred to Julie d'Artonne, and especially on the conduct of Monsieur de L——, the particulars of which he detailed truly and accurately, though his own comments might perhaps be tinged by prejudice and passion; and he ended by beseeching the viscount to intercede with the king for the Count d'Artonne, and also, if possible, to obtain the pardon of poor Jean Marais.

Monsieur de St. Medard heard him to the conclusion calmly, and almost in silence, merely stopping him from time to time to ask a question, and then suffering him to go on without comment. At length, when he ended, monsieur shook his head gravely, saying, "I fear, my dear Francis, my intercession will be in vain. I have certainly served the king successfully. In the space of one fortnight which I spent at Pondicherry, I have regulated the affairs for which I was sent, quieted the dissensions which existed amongst the officers of the crown in that place, and by a little firmness, perhaps a little severity, have taught them that they are there for the service of the state, not for their own aggrandizement. Any reward for myself I had long ago determined neither to seek nor to accept, and I will zealously plead the cause of the Count d'Artonne. Nevertheless, I fear the king will remain firm. He is not easily to be shaken upon such subjects; and all that I can hope is, that something will appear at the count's trial, either to prove him perfectly innocent or to make a favourable impression

on his judges. As for this Monsieur de L——, however, though it is dangerous in this country to attack a minister high in favour and power, I will certainly give the clearest account of his conduct to his majesty; for, taking your representations, as I do, to be perfectly accurate, nothing can be more scandalous, more unjust, I might almost say more treasonable, than the use he has made of the king's name, and his behaviour altogether. There are few who will venture to break through ordinary rule and etiquette in order to bring truth to the ear of the sovereign; but I believe that he who does so serves him better than the soldier in the field or the statesman in the cabinet. I may well plead for the count, too, for he is an old and a dear friend, between whom and myself not even rivalry in love could make a breach. I will see the king to-morrow morning, without fail; and as soon as I have offered my petition and received my reply, I will return with you to Auvergne and be present at this trial. Friends are too apt to fall away from us at such moments, Francis; and countenance and support to a man at such a moment is worth all the rest we can do for him through life. Now I will leave you to sleep: good-bye for to-night;" and after pausing for an instant, as if half inclined to add something else, the viscount once more bade him adieu and left him.

"I will tell him to-morrow," said the viscount to himself when he had closed the door. "He was wrong, certainly very wrong, to take such a part in D'Artonne's flight. The laws of our country are the first things we should consider—" He paused, looked upward with a placid smile, and added, bowing his head—"except the laws of God."

When Francis de Langy rose on the following morning, still somewhat stiff and weary with his journey, he found that his uncle had already departed for Versailles, whence he did not return till four or five o'clock. In the mean while, the young gentleman visited the small inn where, as the reader may remember, he had held a conversation with a stranger regarding the Count d'Artonne; but, notwithstanding every effort, he could not discover who that stranger was, or where he was to be found. The people of the house seemed to have no notion to whom he alluded; the landlord thought it was one person, the landlady another, the waiter a third; and Francis de Langy returned disappointed. Anxious, however, to convict Monsieur de L—— in some of the artifices which he suspected him of having resorted to, he asked the Marquis de Langy if he still possessed the letter which he received from the king in answer to his application respecting the Count d'Artonne. The marquis, luckily, had preserved it, and gave it to him; and Francis

de Langy, on reading it through, found that the words were precisely those of the epistle which had been shown to Julie.

On the return of Monsieur de St. Medard, he met his adopted son with a grave countenance, and taking a paper from a number which he held in his hand, presented it to him, saying, "There, my dear boy; I have obtained that for your friend Jean Marais; but I have promised the king, at the same time, to speak to you most seriously on the impropriety of aiding a prisoner in his escape under any circumstances. The laws of our country are imperative upon us all as citizens; and if individuals were to think themselves justified in breaking those laws, either when they do not exactly approve of the manner of their execution, or feel them to be hard in a particular case, the whole framework of society would soon be dissolved. Pray do not reply, Francis; for, depend upon it, you have done wrong, although your participation in D'Artonne's escape cannot be proved so as to subject you to punishment. The king, however, is perfectly aware of the fact; and he showed his clemency and sense of justice remarkably when he signed Jean Marais' pardon, saying, 'I do this, Monsieur de St. Medard, because I believe the man acted under the influence of his master.' 'And I beg that you will pardon the master also,' I replied, 'for he acted under the influence of Love, who was his master for the moment.' You must keep the pardon, however, Francis," the viscount continued, "till our good friend Jean can be found; for it seems he has made his escape from L'Orient, and no one knows where he is now."

"But, Monsieur d'Artonne," inquired Francis; "what did the king say of Monsieur d'Artonne?"

The viscount shook his head, and replied, "All that his majesty could be induced to answer was, that nothing would lead him to pervert the course of justice. 'Monsieur d'Artonne must abide his trial,' he said. 'If he be declared guilty, his sentence will not be executed till I have had all the papers read: his case will then have the most favourable consideration; and the high testimony which some of my best and most faithful subjects have borne to his honour, his kindness of heart, and his benevolence, will of course be taken into account in his favour. But I warn you, Monsieur de St. Medard, that I have solemnly pledged myself never to pass over any more of those duels which have so frequently taken place under the name of chance encounters. I therefore trust, that if Monsieur d'Artonne did really and truly kill this young man, he will be able to prove that it was in his own defence, otherwise it will go hard with him.' As you may easily conceive, Francis," continued the viscount, "I could say no more; and all that can be now done

is for us to go down, as soon as you are able for the journey, in order to watch the progress of events in Auvergne."

"Oh! I am ready this moment," exclaimed Francis de Langy; "let us not wait an hour on my account, my dear uncle."

"Nay, nay, Francis," replied the viscount; "there is no need of such haste, if, as you tell me, the trial does not come on for a fortnight: besides, I have papers to sign to-morrow. I will not quit Paris again without putting your succession to the estates of St. Medard beyond all doubt or question."

With all the eager impatience of youth, Francis de Langy would fain have besought his uncle to delay all such arrangements till the more important business, in his eyes, of the count's trial was over. But Monsieur de St. Medard would not give way; and it was not till after a day's interval that the viscount and his nephew were once more upon the way to Auvergne.

We will not pause to give even a summary of the conversation which took place between the old and the young traveller, as they rolled on upon the ground which they had first journeyed along together some fifteen months before. It may easily be conceived that there was still much to be told on either side, still much to be discussed between them; and the first day passed almost entirely in conversation, with very few intervals of meditation. Both were grave, for the object of their journey was of too painful a nature to admit of anything even approaching to cheerfulness to enter into the mood of either. But as they came near Auvergne the viscount seemed to find great delight in the beauty of the country, and pointed out to his young companion the richness of some parts and the picturesque splendour of others. The weather had now become fine, and though there was a shade of autumn in the fields and on the trees, the fair land through which they went never perhaps looked fairer. But Francis could take no pleasure in the scenery; the cloud of anxiety that overshadowed his mind hid its beauty from his eyes; and he replied to Monsieur de St. Medard, when he was pointing out to him some object of interest, "Alas! my dear uncle, I am sadly changed since first I passed through this very country. I can no longer look upon it with the same eyes; I can no longer feel in it the same delight."

"I too am changed, my dear Francis," rejoined his uncle; "and, much as I ever admired the loveliness of nature, I now find in it new enjoyment which I discovered not before. Do you know the cause of this alteration in you and me, Francis? With you it is that you have taken a step forward, and the breath of manhood's cares and manhood's

anxieties has dimmed the glass through which you see the world. I too have taken a step forward, but in so doing I have had a veil torn from my eyes, and in all the works of Nature I see the hand of God. Thus it is that these scenes appear to me with as much freshness as they did to you in the spring of last year. Do not let your anxiety weary you, however, my dear boy; in six or seven hours more we shall be at Riom.—But what have we here? Oh! a wagon-load of convicts: thus it is that man mars God's beautiful landscape. Man's doings! man's doings! they are the great blot in the wonderful creation."

As they spoke, they passed a long open cart, with two ranges of convicts back to back, united by a chain down the middle, and with their legs hanging over the side. Some of the agents of police were mounted in the front, and five or six Argousins, or guards, were trudging along by the wagon, while one of the officers, after turning to say something to one of the prisoners, sprang across the bench on which he was seated, and struck him brutally and repeatedly over the head with a stick. Almost at the same instant Francis leaned forward, and called loudly out of the window to the postilions to stop.

"What is the matter, Francis," asked the viscount; "what is the matter? You must not interfere."

"It is our own poor friend, Jean Marais himself!" exclaimed Francis, jumping out of the carriage: "I saw his face distinctly as we passed."

"Oh! then we may set him free," cried Monsieur de St. Medard; and, waiting till the wagon slowly came up, he also got out of the *chaise-de-poste* and called to the captain of the chain to stop.

A volley of abuse, folly, blasphemy, and ribaldry, was instantly poured upon the two gentlemen from the tenants of the wagon; and poor Jean Marais, though he saw who were the persons speaking to the officer, did not venture even to appear to recognise them, from a dread of his ferocious companions.

Not a few difficulties were made by the captain of the chain before he would set Jean Marais at liberty, although the terms of the pardon were precise. He said that he was bound to take the prisoner to the *bagne*, and that the pardon must be directed to the captain of the galleys. Monsieur de St. Medard showed him that the warrant distinctly ordered all the king's officers to set the person named Jean Marais at liberty wherever he was found, and not to detain or molest him upon any pretence—the monarch supposing, at the time he signed it, that the prisoner had not been recaptured. Still there was some opposition, and one would have supposed

from the obstinacy with which the man held out, that he took a real pleasure in the detention of each of his unfortunate gang. A severe menace, however, on the part of the viscount, accompanied by the announcement of his name and station, at length produced the consent of the captain of the chain; but it was necessary to proceed to the next village before poor Jean Marais could be freed from his fetters.

He did not go thither indeed without risk, for his worthy companions, though willing on all occasions to aid a fellow-convict in making his escape from justice by any cunning device, loved not to be separated from him in a legitimate manner, and felt some inclination to dash his brains out rather than suffer him to take advantage of his pardon. At length, however, the village was reached, the carriage of the viscount proceeding slowly after the wagon; the chain was knocked off the neck of the unfortunate prisoner, and, starting away free, his first impulse was to turn towards the captain of the chain, and to shake his clenched fist at him, exclaiming, "If ever I meet you man to man, I'll not leave an inch of white skin about you." A loud shout of approval burst from the convicts, and the wagon moved on, the captain replying with a mocking laugh, and telling him to take care of his *sorbonne*, meaning thereby his head.

Jean Marais next gave way to his joy and gratitude, displaying both with a liveliness and eagerness which none but a Frenchman could exhibit. He was evidently very weak, however, from bad treatment and want of proper food; and, giving him a couple of louis, the viscount told him to take a night's repose and refreshment at St. Pourzain, and then to follow to Clermont as fast as possible.

"See what it is to be lucky!" exclaimed Jean Marais, who, with true French ingenuity, extracted all that was favourable out of any situation in which he might be placed. "See what it is to be lucky! If I had not been taken back to Bicêtre just as a chain was going off for Toulon, I should have been sent to L'Orient, and remained perhaps half-a-year at the bagne before I should have been liberated."

"But how came they to bring you by this road?" asked the viscount: "they ought to have kept to the east of Moulins."

"Because the Argousins are all Auvergnats," answered Jean Marais, "and they always take a turn through Limagne. —I shan't be long after you, Monsieur le Vicomte," he continued, as the gentlemen got into their carriage. "But, pray, when you get to St. Pourzain, tell the mayor to give me a certificate of my pardon, otherwise I shall soon be trapped again, as that fellow has carried off the paper."

The viscount promised that he would do as he desired

while they were changing horses, and, notwithstanding the ragged appearance of poor Jean Marais, would very willingly have taken him along the road with him, had there been any room in or about the carriage. Such, however, was not the case; and as St. Pourzain was but two miles in advance, the fatigue of walking thither could not be very great. On reaching that village, he sent at once for the mayor, explained briefly the situation of Jean Marais, and obtained from the good man a promise to furnish the released convict with the requisite documents.

CHAPTER LI.

THE writing of a romance is like taking a walk with a friend, with whom we intend to go on talking of this thing or that which we have laid out before us, discussing some kindly difference of opinion, giving a long account of what has happened since last we met, or employing our time in any other stated manner without considering the rest of the world in the least degree. Scarcely have we gone a hundred yards, however, when we encounter some troublesome fellow who seizes us by the button. A little farther on a stranger saunters up and asks us his way. Beyond that again, another friend meets us with some important news, and perhaps a third turns round with us and walks to the end of the journey. So that—without taking into consideration all the occasions on which we ourselves stop to gather a flower or admire a prospect, or to knock down some acorns from the oaks above our heads—we are sure to be interrupted about fifty times in pursuing the original subject of our discourse, and may think ourselves very well off if we get to the end of our story at all.

We now have Jean Marais upon our hands, dear reader; and, however anxious we may be to go on to Clermont, we must stop with him for a little while, not at all to inquire into the past, but to see what became of him at present. About a quarter of an hour after the carriage of Monsieur de St. Medard had driven away from the door of the inn at St. Pourzain, Jean Marais trudged up, with spirit unbroken, though somewhat faint and weary of limb. He found the postmaster, with his hands behind his back, standing in the attitude of most postmasters, and gazing up and down the road. The recommendation he had received from the viscount procured him a civil reception, notwithstanding his

very convict-like appearance; and the mayor, who was sitting in the kitchen, sipping a small measure of the excellent wine of the place, furnished our friend with the necessary papers to enable him to pursue his journey in safety, upon the payment of a small fee. Jean then sat down, and spent an hour in eating and drinking at his ease, more heartily than he had done for some months; after which, finding himself not a little refreshed, and with all the renewed vigour of freedom about him, he rose, paid for his food, and declared he would walk on to Le Mayet.

"Why, it is four leagues," said the aubergiste postmaster: "if you wait a little, there's a cart going to Gannat, which will take you for a crown, and that's two leagues farther."

"How long will it be?" asked Jean Marais; "I want to get along on the road."

"Oh, not above half-an-hour," replied the master of the inn. "It reaches Gannat at five o'clock every evening."

This was too tempting an opportunity to be neglected, and Jean Marais very willingly waited for the vehicle, calculating that he should easily find some conveyance of the same kind from Gannat to Clermont on the following morning. The cart was one of the light machines of the country, which in those days supplied the place of a diligence from town to town; and, though poor Jean Marais went somewhat faster than he had done in the wagon with his fellow-convicts, his bones paid for the rapidity of his progress. Gannat was, however, reached at the end of about three hours and a half; and, stopping at a small inn, the traveller paid his money to the driver, and prepared to make himself comfortable for the night. In this expectation, as in most of the expectations of mortal man, Jean Marais was destined to be disappointed; for, seating himself at a long table where several other travellers had just begun their supper, he listened for a while to their conversation, which soon put him into a state of considerable agitation.

The personages who were speaking together had looked upon poor Jean, on taking his place, with a somewhat supercilious air, and had drawn away from him, lowering their tone at the same time, so that the first part of what they said passed unheard. Very soon, however, the tones rose, and the one exclaimed, somewhat vehemently shaking three of his fingers across the table in the other's face, to give emphasis to his speech, "I tell you he will, as sure as I am alive, and serve him right too; he was always meddling where he had no business. Why did he bring those heretic Bures amongst us?"

"He did not bring them," replied the other; "they came without his asking."

"Then he should have sent them back again to the Cevennes," rejoined the first. "In former days we should have had them burned or hanged, but we are mighty squeamish about those things now; and then, when we had got hold of the son, and could have sent him to the galleys for his poaching and stealing game, he must needs interfere and let him off free. But he will pay for it now. I'm sure his condemnation is as certain as that I am sitting here."

"What time does it come on?" asked the other.

"At twelve," answered the first. "Can you be there?"

"I shall try," replied his companion. "Will you?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur le Baron," said the other. "I wouldn't be away for a thousand livres."

"I heard a gentleman from Clermont declare," observed the landlord, who had been changing some dishes at the table, "that he was sure to be condemned, for that one of the judges who had interrogated him had been heard to acknowledge that there was no doubt of his guilt. I am very sorry for it, for he was a kind-hearted man."

"You are a fool," said one of the gentlemen at the table, who was of the small nobility of the province—little better, indeed, than a mere peasant in knowledge or intelligence, but with pride and malevolence enough to make up for all other deficiencies.

"A pretty specimen of a judge!" exclaimed Jean Marais, rising from the table. "When does the trial come on?"

"To-morrow at twelve," replied the aubergiste, withdrawing a little from the guest who had given him so unpleasant a rebuff; "but what matters it to you, young man? You seem alarmed and moved."

"I am! I am!" answered Jean Marais. "Come hither! come hither! Where can I get a horse, my good friend?" he continued. "I must contrive to get beyond Riom to-night."

"I have got no horse," replied the landlord, looking at him from head to foot, and seeing his coat deprived of its collar, his hair cut short on one side, and left long on the other; all of which were signs of the place from whence he came.

"I must have a horse for any money," rejoined Jean Marais. "The count's life, my good sir," he added, in a lower tone, "may depend upon my getting to Riom to-night. At noon to-morrow does it come on? Good God! there is scarcely time even now."

"Then you must go to the post," said the landlord; "that's the only place where you'll get a horse at this time of day, and then you must have a postilion with you. Stay, stay! not so fast," he continued, seeing Jean turning towards the

door: "three livres, if you please—you must pay for what you've had."

"Why, I have scarcely tasted anything," answered Jean.

"You might if you had liked," said the landlord: "you sat down to supper and drank some wine; so that's the price, and no more to be said."

Jean Marais would not stay to dispute the point, but discharged the demand and proceeded at once to the post-house, where, on application for a horse to go on to Aigueperse, the first reply was a burst of laughter. He insisted, however, and on paying beforehand, succeeded in obtaining what he wanted. It was seven o'clock before he reached the little town from which he had again to find his way forward; but here the postmaster turned away from him with a look of contempt, replying that, "he had no horses for such people;" and, on Jean's remonstrating somewhat angrily, drove him out of the yard, saying with a sneer, that "all his cattle were out," and adding to the postilion who had brought him thither, "This is a fine time of day, indeed, when rogues ride post!"

Poor Jean Marais was now well-nigh in despair. He applied at two small inns without being able to hear of any method of conveyance; and the sum which was now left in his purse—somewhat less than a louis—did not furnish him with the means of holding out any great temptation to those who might possess the sort of animal that he wanted. Walking up the long street of which the town of Aigueperse consists, he looked up to the sky, which was clear and bright, and promised another hour of daylight.

"I will do it on foot," he cried; "I will do it on foot if I drop down dead at the end. It is but five leagues, and the count's life depends upon it."

Just as he was so thinking, however, some one grasped his shoulder, and turning round he saw an archer of the *maréchaussée*.

"Ha, ha! *mon cher!*" cried the man, with a knowing look: "you seem to me very like an escaped convict."

"No," replied Jean Marais; "I am a liberated one. Here are my papers; you can read them yourself."

"No, I can't," replied the man, with a grin: "that's an art I don't possess; but my lieutenant can, and he'll tell us more about it to-morrow. In the mean time you must come with me."

"Stop me at your peril!" said Jean Marais, looking at him furiously; but the archer drew his sword, exclaiming, "Ho, ho! do you resist the police?" and, one of his comrades approaching at the moment, Jean was obliged to submit, and go back with them into the town.

CHAPTER LII.

IN a large hall of the Palais de Justice, the judges were assembled for the trial of the Count d'Artonne. The president sat in the middle, with three or four other magistrates on either hand, having the intendant of the province on his right, with a small table, or rather writing-desk, between them. At a board below were ranged several clerks and different officers of the court, and on the left were a number of advocates; while, placed almost in front of the court, was a high stool at the corner of a small platform which ran along to the right raised by a step or two, about three feet from the ground. As soon as the judges had taken their seats the doors were thrown open, for the trial was to be a public one (which was by no means always the case in those times); and a crowd of spectators instantly rushed in, nearly filling those parts of the hall which were not separated from the actual court by a strong wooden railing.

Some bustle and confusion naturally took place, and a good deal of noise; but, order having been re-established, the president spoke a few words to a person below him, who went out; and in a minute after a door behind the platform we have mentioned, but which was level with it, and guarded on the right and left by two archers, opened suddenly, and the Count d'Artonne himself appeared.

As was common in the cases of men of rank and station, the count did not present himself alone, but was accompanied by a number of persons, some of them in reality friends, some of them assuming that title from motives of vanity, curiosity, or any other of the follies or passions which lead people to put themselves into prominent situations in which they have no business to appear. Close by the count, on his right hand, was the Viscount de St. Medard, with Francis de Langy, while on his left advanced Monsieur de L—, and no less a personage than the Bishop of Clermont, the sight of whom excited not a little surprise amongst the persons who filled the court—not alone because it was considered indecorous for ecclesiastics to be present at criminal trials, when they could avoid it, but also because his sister, Madame de Bausse, had shown herself most virulent and eager in attempting to fix guilt upon Monsieur d'Artonne, and the bishop was supposed to have countenanced her most violent proceedings against their cousin.

The mode of proceeding in a French court of law has always been much more irregular, even in the best of times, than in England. It is so still, and probably ever will be so; for the French contend, that truth being the great object to be obtained, it may be sought for by any means the most likely to reach it, while in England it is believed that the surest means of arriving at truth and shutting out falsehood is by keeping within certain limits, which the wisdom and experience of many centuries have assigned to the admission of evidence. The trial of the count, therefore, was conducted in as different a manner as possible from any similar proceeding in this country; and yet it was much more consistent with our ideas of right and justice than many others which could be named.

Immediately on entering the court, Monsieur d'Artonne was directed to take his place on the elevated seat we have mentioned, called the *sellette*; and one of the clerks at the table, by order of the president, read over the charge against the prisoner. The count was pale, but calm and firm in the expression of his countenance, and neither in aspect nor demeanour did he betray the slightest symptom of agitation or apprehension. The same could not be said of Francis de Langy, who listened with a look of deep anxiety to the words of the clerk, which went to accuse the count of having wilfully, maliciously, and with premeditation slain the Marquis de Bausse, on a day, hour, and place, which he mentioned. At the terms "maliciously and with premeditation," Monsieur d'Artonne exclaimed in a loud tone, "No, no, that is false—that is very false!"

"Let the witnesses be called," said the president; and after a little movement in the court, one of the servants of Madame de Bausse was brought forward, who swore that twice during the month which preceded his young master's death he had heard high and angry words passing between him and the Count d'Artonne. What they were he could not exactly say; but it was evident the count was very much enraged, and used high tones and fierce gestures.

"Do you acknowledge these facts?" asked the president, following the somewhat extraordinary practice of questioning the prisoner in regard to the evidence brought against him, and looking sternly at Monsieur d'Artonne; "and if so, what was the nature of this dispute?"

"The man has spoken the truth," replied the count calmly; "only he might have said, that some half-dozen times during that month such discussions took place. Sometimes the cause was one thing, sometimes another. Complaints were daily brought to me of his violence and of his vices: these were frequent subjects for angry words between

us. Then, again, twice in that month he asked my daughter's hand, and I as often told him that I would sooner give her to an honest peasant than to such a man as himself. He once replied that he would have her whether I would or not, and you may well suppose that a sharp dispute occurred on this occasion also."

"In short," said the advocate of Madame de Bausse, who had examined the servant, "there was enmity between you, colour it in what way you will."

Another witness was then called, who proved that the count had forbidden Monsieur de Bausse, three days before his death, to come any more to the Chateau d'Artonne, or to show himself in its neighbourhood.

"What was the cause of this, Monsieur le Comte?" asked the president, with his cold, severe glance.

"He had ill-used the daughter of one of my peasants," replied the count—"brutally ill-used her. Had I known that this would be brought against me, the girl herself should have been sent for."

"Thus," said the advocate of Madame de Bausse, in a calm and sneering tone, "step by step we trace the enmity and malevolence of Monsieur d'Artonne towards his unfortunate victim. There is more evidence upon this head, where a distinct menace is conveyed: this letter, in the count's own hand, tells the same tale still more distinctly. I require that it be received;" and he handed it to one of the clerks, who read it in a loud voice. It was addressed to the Marquis de Bausse, and ran as follows:—

MONSIEUR MON COUSIN,—Once more I tell you that my daughter shall never be yours. After all you have done, you ought never to expect such a thing. Not a day passes but some new act of criminality is committed by you; and as your relation I warn you to change such a course of life; for, be assured, if man does not punish you, God will.

"Now," continued the advocate, before the president of the court or any of the judges could interrogate the prisoner respecting the letter—"now we have the malice proved; we have only further to establish the fact of the murder. The witnesses first to be called are merely those of form, to show when and which way the unfortunate Marquis de Bausse proceeded to the spot where he met his death."

A number of persons were then examined, who proved the hour at which the marquis had gone out, the way which he had taken, and the places he had stopped by the road. His entrance into the little wood where he was found was witnessed by a man who had been passing at the time, and who declared that soon afterwards he heard the sound of a gun proceeding from the same direction.

"Did you hear no other noise?" exclaimed the count suddenly, bending a stern look upon the man as he concluded.

"Yes," replied the witness; "I heard what seemed to be a scream."

"Was it before or after the shot?" asked Monsieur d'Artonne, while the deep silence of anxious attention fell upon the count.

"It was about a minute before," the witness answered.

"Then why did you not state that first?" inquired the count, sternly.

The man hesitated.

"Answer!" exclaimed the president, sharply.

"Because," replied the man, "Monsieur de L—— told me to say nothing that I was not asked."

The count turned slowly round upon the sellette, and bowed his head to Monsieur de L—— with a bitter smile.

"Call the next witness," said the advocate; and the moment after Peter Neri appeared before the court.

His dark Italian countenance was very pale, making his close-shaved beard look more blue and marked than ever; and his eye, wandering round the hall, and seeking to catch everything that was taking place, without enduring the glance of any other person, was not calculated to impress the court with an idea of his honesty. When questioned, however, he spoke boldly, and in a firm strong voice.

"The count," he said, "had gone out on the morning of Monsieur de Bausse's death, in his usual shooting-dress, but had no dogs with him, and no gamekeeper. He was certain that there were no spots of blood upon his coat or gloves when he left home. At the end of about an hour and a half, or perhaps two hours, he returned, put down his gun in his dressing-room, and changed his dress. The coat was then bloody in several places, the gun had been discharged; but he brought no game home with him. He, Peter Neri himself had washed out the stains of blood, but not by the direction. He suspected the fact," he said, "of his having killed Monsieur de Bausse, as soon as he learned that the latter had disappeared, because he had often heard the count speak very angrily of his young cousin, and remembered his saying more than once, that he ought to be shot. He had not, however, mentioned the circumstances till after the body of the marquis had been found, and he then did so, simply out of love of justice."

"You had stopped before those last words, villain," cried the president, "you would but have told the truth; but as the lie is of no importance, let it pass."

Some more witnesses were then called, who proved that the count had entered the wood in question about the same

time as Monsieur de Bausse, but from a different side; and others followed, giving a description of the finding of the body, and detailing the particulars concerning that fact, with which the reader is already acquainted.

"Nothing is now wanting to my case," proceeded the advocate of Madame de Bausse, "but the *procès verbal* of the count's interrogatory, and I require it to be read."

"It is unnecessary," replied Monsieur d'Artonne. "I am ready to repeat what I have already said, publicly and straightforwardly, honestly and truly. Monsieur de Bausse *did* fall by my hand; and, even if I had killed him intentionally, which is not the case, I should have been fully justified in so doing; but, as his death did actually occur, it was accidental. I had gone out in the morning, as has been related to you, with my gun in my hand, loaded with ball, for the purpose, if I met it, of killing a wolf which I had seen that morning in the wood; and I did so at that particular hour because I knew that my daughter must be coming along the path just about that time. I had not proceeded ten steps amongst the trees when I started the animal from the thicket in which I had before seen it take refuge. I fired and wounded it, but it got away, and I stopped to reload my gun. I had just done so when I heard a cry from the path above. I knew my child's voice, and, thinking that the wounded wolf had attacked her, I rushed up as fast as possible. I found that she had met with a still more detestable brute—her own cousin, De Bausse, who was holding her firmly in his arms, while she screamed and struggled to liberate herself. Throwing down my gun at the foot of a tree, I darted upon him and struck him in the face. He instantly turned upon me and set free my daughter, who ran away in order to seek help, I believe, to part us. We both drew our swords, but I disarmed him in a moment, upon which he snatched up the gun and aimed a blow of it at my head. I parried the stroke, but received it upon my arm, and then, catching the gun, struggled with him for it. As I did so it went off. I declare, by my hopes of salvation, that I *never* touched the trigger; but immediately after the report he staggered back and fell. I saw he was wounded, and knelt down beside him, raising his head; but he made no reply when I spoke, and I hurried away as fast as possible to seek for some assistance. I took the lower paths through the wood, till I came to the high-road, and walked on foot towards Riom. A carriage passed me as I went, and I called to the postilion to stop, but he did not hear me, and drove on. I next met a decrepit old woman, who used to beg at the entrance of Riom, and asked her to go to the town and send up Monsieur Marcey, the surgeon, as fast as possible,

while I went back to give what help I could. . It was not the wisest course I could pursue, but I was agitated and bewildered—foolishly so; but I remembered at that moment all the disputes I had had with Monsieur de Bausse; and I doubted not, if he died without speaking, such an accusation as this would be brought against me. I returned then quickly to the spot, and ——”

“And buried the body,” said the president.

“No,” replied Monsieur d’Artonne, firmly: “as I said before, so I now repeat, the body was no longer there, and I never saw it till after it was exhumed.”

“I demand,” exclaimed the advocate of Madame de Bausse, “that Mademoiselle d’Artonne be examined. When her testimony is given, I will then show you how palpably false is the prisoner’s account of himself.”

“False?” cried the Count d’Artonne, turning upon him fiercely; but his face became calm a moment after, and he added, “I forgot; you are hired to say such things. I could have wished my child had been spared this; but if it must be, it must.”

“Mademoiselle d’Artonne is not far off,” observed one of the gentlemen who had accompanied the count into court: “she was with her mother without, not a minute ago.”

Monsieur de St. Medard quitted the hall in silence, and in a minute returned, supporting Julie upon his arm, and followed by an officer of the court. She was pale and agitated, and gazed around her somewhat wildly, running her eye over all the array of judges and lawyers, and the crowded hall, with its sea of eager faces. She then gave one look towards the count, and murmuring, with a sad shake of the head, “Oh, my father!” she burst into tears.

The president and the rest of the judges seemed moved with some compassion; but the advocate of Madame de Bausse exclaimed, as soon as she had taken her seat, “Now, Mademoiselle d’Artonne, answer upon your oath, and say ——”

“Speak more gently, speak more gently,” said the president. “Tell us, young lady, candidly and truly, what took place after you entered the wood in which, as you know, the body of Monsieur de Bausse was found, on the day when his death is supposed to have taken place.”

Julie wiped her eyes and raised her head, and, gazing straight in the face of the president, she replied, “I was coming from the village of Artonne, along the path which leads direct to the chateau, when, a little past the fountain, I met my cousin, Monsieur de Bausse, and, wishing him good morning, was going on.”

“Why were you going on?” asked the advocate.

"Because my father," replied Julie, "was not friends with him. He then stopped me," she proceeded, the colour coming into her cheek, "and would not let me pass."

Here, however, the advocate of Madame de Bausse interfered, having produced all the effect upon the court that he desired.

"I fear," he said, "we have committed a mistake. A daughter cannot give evidence in the case of her father."

"At least let me have the advantage thereof," said the Count d'Artonne, starting up vehemently. "Speak, Julie; speak!"

Julie did speak, rapidly, eagerly, clearly, before she could be stopped, as if she saw the lawyer's cunning and was resolved to frustrate it. "He would not let me pass," she said; "he threw his arms round me, and tried to draw me from the path; I screamed aloud; my father rushed up and struck him, dropping the gun he had in his hand. They drew their swords, and I ran to call some one to stop them. But ere I had gone far I heard a shot; I was sure some one was killed; and then I grew faint and giddy, and fell upon the ground."

"Monsieur d'Artonne," asked the president, "can you bring any evidence to show that the gun went off in the struggle between you and Monsieur de Bausse?"

"How can I bring evidence," said the count, "when there was no one present?"

"How can he," cried the advocate, "when it is evidently false? Malice and hatred are proved against him; he does not deny the deed. His going out armed with his usual attendants, with no dogs, with no servants, his taking his way to a wood through which Monsieur de Bausse was accustomed to walk on his road to Riom, all show premeditation; and his burial of the body afterwards proves that he was conscious of his crime."

The judges looked down thoughtfully, and there was something in the tone and manner of the president, as he turned to the count and asked, "Have you any defence to make, Monsieur d'Artonne, or will you speak by your advocate?" which created an impression in all who heard him that the minds of the judges were made up as to the guilt of the count.

The prisoner's advocate then approached and addressed a few words to him in a low tone; but, just at that moment one of the doors of the hall opened, some people forced their way in amongst the crowd, and several voices exclaimed, "Here is a witness! here is a witness, who has not been examined!"

The eyes of the judges and the bar were bent in that direction. The count and his advocate started and turned

round, and Julie, who had not yet retired from the court, clasped her hands and murmured, "Jean Marais!"

But Jean was only the forerunner of a more important person, clearing the way through a crowd before him; and the moment after, an old, white-headed, but still powerful man came into the front, and looking round on the judges exclaimed, "I want to tell what I know."

"Speak," said the president. "First, what is your name?"

"My name is Antoine Bure," replied the man; "I am well known in the country, and never wronged any man."

"And what have you to say?" demanded the president. "Speak boldly, for we seek for truth."

"You shall have nothing else from me," replied Antoine Bure, "for I have always loved it myself. It is the poor man's riches, and the rich man's best jewel. On the third of May, last year, at ten o'clock in the morning, I went out from my house, and took my way down towards the bank of the Ambene. The distance is about three leagues, and I chose the quietest paths."

"What was the object of your going?" asked the president; and, every time there was a pause in the old man's testimony, the crowd of auditors turned their gaze from him, either to the face of the count, the expression of which was that of wonder and inquiry, or to the fair countenance of Julie d'Artonne, which was full of joy and hope, though ever and anon her eyes ran over with tears.

"The object of my going, monseigneur," replied the peasant, was this: "I have a son who has sometimes given me trouble. In the country where we came from, some years ago, the game of the fields was free to any one, and he had there acquired a habit which is here called poaching, and punishable by law. He had killed some game upon the estates of the Count d'Artonne; he was detected, the officers of justice pursued him, and he took refuge in the forests and mountains. On that day I had intimation that he was to be found in the low wood by the bank of the Ambene, and I went down to him with a basket of food and some money, but more for the purpose of counselling him to cast himself upon the mercy of the Count d'Artonne, to avow his error, and promise not to commit it again, than even for the purpose of supplying his bodily necessities. I found him, and had a long conversation with him, but he feared to do as I proposed; and after sitting together for some time on the bank of the river, we parted, and I took my way back through the wood. Before I quitted it I heard a gun discharged, and the next moment a wounded wolf ran by me; and, thinking that the gamekeepers of the count were in the wood, and that if they saw me they would conclude my son

was there and seek him, I hid myself behind the stonework of the fountain. In a minute after Mademoiselle d'Artonne passed by, and I saw the young Marquis de Bausse meet her and speak to her. What he said I know not, but the next moment he threw his arms round her, and she struggled to get away, uttering a scream. I thought to myself, 'If you do not free her, young man, I will break your head with my staff, be you the noblest in the land,' and I took a step forward; but just then up came the Count d'Artonne, as fast as he could run. He had a gun in his hand, but he cast it down on the ground, and struck Monsieur de Bausse with his clenched fist. Both the gentlemen drew their swords, and mademoiselle ran away calling for help. In a moment the sword of Monsieur de Bausse flew out of his hand, and the count might have killed him, but he did not. The marquis then, however, caught up the gun from the foot of the tree, and holding it by the barrel, struck at the head of Monsieur d'Artonne. The count caught the stock, and struggled with him for the gun. As they did so it went off, and Monsieur de Bausse fell back upon the ground. The count knelt down by him, and spoke to him, then started up, and cried, 'Good heaven! where shall I get a surgeon?' after which he ran away towards Riom as fast as he could, and before I could well recover my own thoughts, which were all astray. When he was gone I went up to the body and looked at it, but the young man was quite dead. I have seen many a dead man in my time, and I knew the signs right well. His eyes were open; his teeth were clenched; the ball must have gone through his heart. Just then I heard people talking at a distance and coming along the path. They were speaking gaily, so that I knew it could not be the Count d'Artonne, and I drew away the body from off the path, that I might have time to think what would be best to do. I then went down and found my son. We came up, we consulted together, and we did very wrong. I acknowledge it; I regret it; and if there is to be punishment, I am ready to be punished. We hid the body under the bushes, and then came and buried it that night, thinking, God help us! that if the count persecuted us, as many others had done, we should have a hold upon him. The next morning, when we met again, we were ashamed and grieved, and wept over the unworthy thoughts that had been in our mind; and my son swore an oath that, even if he were arrested for taking the count's game, he would never say one word of the death of the Marquis de Bausse, or hold out one threat to Monsieur d'Artonne on that account. He kept that oath, for he was arrested and imprisoned for full three weeks, and he never uttered one word."

The old man ceased, and there was a murmur of satisfaction through the court, which seemed to overawe even the advocate of Madame de Bausse.

"How long is it since you saw the count?" demanded the president.

"Nearly a year," replied the old man, "and that was but for a moment. It was also the only time I have seen him since the death of Count de Bausse."

"Did anything pass between you and him regarding that event?" demanded the president.

"Not one word," answered the old man. "Mademoiselle d'Artonne there, and the young gentleman that stands next but one to the count, were present, and heard all."

There was a low murmur of consultation amongst the judges, and the advocate of Madame de Bausse came forward as if to address the court; but the president, turning towards him, bent his head emphatically, saying, "You may speak, sir, if you think fit; but the court has made up its mind, and nothing that can be said, after the evidence we have heard, will alter our decision."

The advocate bowed with a look of mortification, and retired a step. The president then rose, and turning to the Count d'Artonne he added, "The judgment of the court, Monsieur d'Artonne, will be formally given to you in writing; but in the mean time it may be satisfactory to you to know, that you are acquitted of the crime with which you stood charged."

The count bowed his head, and stepped down from the sellette, opening his arms. Julie sprang into them, and wept upon his bosom.

There was a deep silence.

CHAPTER LIII.

PASS over six weeks, dear reader, and accompany me, if you please, to the chamber of Francis de Langy, at the Hôtel de Langy in Paris. Let the time be about nine o'clock on a fine morning, somewhat autumnal in its hues, as bright as summer, but clearer than the early day usually is in the season when the warm sunshine makes the air misty with profuse light. Let us say, too, that a few days before the Count and Countess d'Artonne, and Julie, as well as the Viscount de St. Medard, had taken up their abode in the Hôtel de Langy; that the succession of Francis to the estates of St. Medard had been secured beyond all possibility of contestation; and that the count and countess had come up to the capital for the purpose of making final arrangements for his union with her he loved best on earth.

What, then, can be the occasion of that shade of gloom which now hangs upon his countenance? Is it that yesterday a step was taken in the courts of law which argued an unfavourable termination of the important cause there pending? No: Francis de Langy had long made up his mind to lose the honours, estates, and name which at one time had appeared to be assuredly his: his spirit had accustomed itself to the expectation, and he thought not of it even for a moment. But there was reason for his sadness; for, on the day before, six of the nearest relations to the Count d'Artonne, persons who had abandoned him in the time of danger and distress, had given formal intimation, in the most courteous terms, of their opposition to the marriage of Julie d'Artonne with a person whose nobility of birth was very doubtful. Such opposition, to the ears of an English person, may seem frivolous and absurd, where the consent of parents was fully given. But in France the case was different; and relations more remote than those who were now arrayed against the marriage had the power, if not of stopping it altogether, at least of delaying it for years. This, then, was the occasion of the gloom on Francis de Langy's countenance; and he felt more particularly anxious and discomposed that morning, because what was called in France a family council was immediately to be held at the Hôtel de Langy, for the further discussion of the whole affair. He and his reputed father and mother were also to be present; and he well knew that much painful matter must meet his ears, although the whole party

would undoubtedly demean themselves with courtesy and propriety towards him.

By his side, as he stood dressing, was Jean Marais, once more restored to his old situation about Francis de Langy, and decked out with all the smartness of a Parisian valet of those times. He remarked, not without some concern, the gloom that was upon his master's face; but nevertheless he was most scrupulously particular in arraying him with neatness and elegance that morning.

"Now, give me my coat, Jean," said Francis de Langy.

"I beg your pardon, sir," exclaimed the valet, approaching with a basin of clean water and a towel; "but just now I saw a black spot upon your right arm which you did not wash off; if you will permit me, I will do it."

"Where?" asked Francis de Langy, in some surprise, baring his finely-formed arm up to the shoulder.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," replied Jean Marais; "I must have made a mistake;" and he concluded the dressing of his master.

Francis then opened the door to go down into the saloon, when a servant met him, telling him that the party expected had arrived. On his entering the room where they were assembled, he found them seated around; Monsieur de Langy and the marchioness doing the honours of the house, the viscount conversing with Julie, Monsieur d'Artonne talking, with forced indifference of aspect, to one of his cousins, and Madame d'Artonne discussing some subject eagerly, but in a low voice, with two of the ladies present. Jean Marais had followed his master down and opened the door for him, although one of the servants of the house was standing ready to perform that office, and Francis de Langy heard his own valet say to the other in a low tone, "Don't show the people I mentioned in here: keep them in the little parlour."

He added something more, which his master, passing on, did not distinguish; and Francis advanced to the Marquis de Langy, who embraced him with signs of much tenderness and affection, and smiled, as if the meeting were altogether a more pleasant one than Francis felt it to be. In a minute or two afterwards, while the young gentleman was being introduced to the persons whom he did not know in the room, a servant brought in a large silver salver with cups; and Jean Marais followed with a bright pot of chocolate, which might have somewhat surprised Francis de Langy, had his thoughts not been otherwise occupied; for the marquis had certainly servants enough to perform the office which his valet took upon himself. He did observe, however—indeed, it was scarcely possible to help it—that Jean seemed in such ecsta-

sies of delight with his new occupation as to be unable to restrain the expression thereof, smirking, smiling, and walking on tiptoe, as if he were the most exquisite chocolate-bearer that the world had ever seen. The young gentleman felt a little annoyed, but soon forgot the matter, as the painful discussion about to take place was to come on immediately after the preliminary refreshment was over.

Before that was the case, however, a servant entered in some haste, saying to the Marquis de Langy, "Your intendant, sir, whom you sent for."

"Oh, take him into that room," replied the marquis, pointing to a door behind the circle in which the company were arranged.

The man retired, and the moment after came in again by the door to which Monsieur de Langy had pointed, saying, "He is there, sir," upon which the marquis immediately proceeded to join him, while Jean Marais continued to hand the chocolate with a somewhat agitated air.

When he had gone round the circle, he took his place behind it, set down the silver chocolate-pot on one of the marble tables, and got as close as possible to the door already mentioned, which had been drawn to by the marquis, but was not exactly closed.

For the last few minutes the eye of Monsieur de St. Medard had been upon Jean's proceedings with some surprise and disapprobation; and after a moment's pause he turned sharply round in his chair, and detected Jean Marais in the very act of putting his ear to the chink of the door.

"Jean, come hither!" he cried in a stern tone.

"Wait an instant, sir," replied Jean, boldly; and at the same moment he threw open the door, darted in, caught Martin Latouches by the throat with one hand, and seized with the other a large old pocket-book, from which he was just taking some accounts.

All the company started up in surprise and gazed into the other room, while Jean wrenched the book from the intendant's grasp and gave it to Monsieur de Langy, saying, "There, sir! if the letter I told you of is not in there, I am a fool; but even if it be not, I have witnesses to prove all the facts."

The intendant had at first turned upon him furiously; but now he paused, wavered, became deadly pale, and as the marquis looked over the papers in the pocket-book one by one, he cast himself suddenly at his feet, exclaiming, "Oh, sir, forgive me, and I will tell you all!"

"What, villain!" cried Monsieur de Langy; "when all is discovered? Witness, gentlemen and ladies all!—witness what he says! There is no going back now. Your only

chance of forgiveness is a fair confession; by it you shall at least escape punishment. How came you to conceal this letter? How came you to withhold from me the facts that it contains?"

"Because—because," replied the steward, hesitating—"because I knew what my brother had said to you, and I feared to get him into trouble. I could not tell which was the true son. He swore that the one was, and his wife swore that the other was. She was as likely to seek for the promotion of her own son by a lie as he. I thought the courts had better settle it," he continued, gaining courage as he went on, "without my meddling."

"But did you not know," asked Jean Marais, "that your brother had taken his oath that his wife was dead when she was living?"

The man was silent, and the marquis continued, turning to Monsieur de St. Medard, "This good fellow has exposed to me a scheme of fraud such as I never heard of before. He has told me by what brutal means the man Gerard Latouches extorted from his wife a false confession regarding the change of my son for their own."

"I saw and heard more than they thought," said Jean Marais.

"The man fancied," continued the marquis, "that the poor creature could not survive the night, and boldly gave out that she was dead. But she lingered for nearly twelve months, and before she died wrote this letter to my intendant, her brother-in-law," and the marquis read. "'I beseech you, Martin,' she says, 'as soon as you get this, to go to Monsieur de Langy, and, as you hope for salvation, inform him that your brother Gerard forced me to sign a paper which was untrue, for the purpose of putting our son Gerard in the place of the young Count de Langy. Tell him it is false, Martin; as I am a poor, sinful, dying woman, it is false. I did not tell the good marchioness a lie; the boy I gave her back was her own son. These are the last words I shall assert in this world.'"

"It is signed with her name," continued the marquis, "but this man has concealed it for several months."

"You had better send for the police," observed Monsieur de St. Medard; "at all events, he ought to have given the letter to you."

"It may be false after all," said Martin Latouches. "Why should I think my brother would tell a lie? and who shall say, between the two, which is the real heir?"

"That will I," replied Jean Marais. "Till I got that letter, I fancied that the tale was true—that the children had been changed, and that I was, in fact, the servant of my own

cousin. But there is a very easy way of ascertaining the fact. The son of Gerard Latouches fell into the fire while he was a child, and burnt his arm; no time will take out those marks, I am sure."

"I remember it well," exclaimed Monsieur de St. Medard: "it was his right arm. Bare your arm, my dear boy; bare your arm!"

"Ah, my good friend!" exclaimed Francis de Langy, holding out his hand to Jean Marais, "now I understand you."

But the man, instead of taking his hand, laid his own upon the sleeve of his master's coat, and gently drew it off, saying to Monsieur de St. Medard, "That no proof may be wanting, sir, with the permission of the marquis I have sent for the curé of Godard, and for an old woman who used to help Marguerite Latouches to nurse the children, in order to prove that it was absolutely and undeniably the son of Gerard and Marguerite Latouches who did fall into the fire in his infancy. Young Gerard and his father are in the house, too; let the right arm of each be examined, and let the curé and the old woman speak.—Call in old Margot and the priest, Henri!" he continued, addressing the other servants, "and bring young Gerard Latouches; but do not say a word to his father, or to any one else, of what is going on. I beg your pardon, sir," he added, turning to Monsieur de Langy; "but, as I have got up the play, I must be stage-manager."

"I will confess, I will confess!" cried Martin Latouches.

"Be quick, then," said the marquis, "or it will be too late."

But before the man could commence his tale of iniquity, the door of the great saloon opened, and the young claimant of the succession of De Langy entered with a self-confident and easy air, as if he expected to be received and welcomed as the heir of the house. As soon, however, as he saw the number of persons assembled, and Martin Latouches standing before the marquis with downcast eyes and trembling limbs, he faltered and paused. But Monsieur de Langy raised his voice, saying, "Come hither, young man? Be so good as to bare your right arm."

As he spoke, an old man in a priest's habit, and a peasant woman, were introduced by the other door, upon seeing whom the countenance of the youth fell, and his limbs shook visibly.

"Bare your arm, I say!" demanded the marquis sternly; and advancing to the priest he took him by the hand, welcomed him courteously to Paris, and then led him forward, saying, "Examine those two young men well, and tell me before God which is my son."

The priest smiled, as if the question were almost a mockery, but still advanced, looked in the faces of the two young men, took them by the hand, examined the right arm of each, and then, laying his finger upon the breast of Francis de Langy, he turned to the marquis, saying in a solemn tone, "Before God and man, this is your son, if either! The other is the son of Gerard Latouches."

It was now the turn of Francis de Langy to hold out his extended arms to Julie d'Artoune, nor was he disappointed. There was a pause of a single instant, the blood rushed up into her cheek; but she gave way to the emotions of her heart, and the next moment she was clasped to his bosom.

